

## Question 38

---

# What is prayer?



## Answer

---

Prayer is pouring out our hearts to God.

### Big Idea

Prayer is talking to God in response to his Word.

### Aim

To help the children understand the concept of prayer and to encourage them to develop a prayerful relationship with God.

### Bible Passage

Psalm 62

### Memory Verse

“Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us.” (Ps. 62:8)

### Virtue

Gratitude





## Notes

---

### Leader's Notes

Children's understanding of prayer is generally limited. They likely have experienced corporate and formal prayer times, but the beauty and intimacy of a prayerful relationship with God is rarely modeled well to children. Children often approach personal prayer as if they're communicating with Santa Claus. They present a wish list to God in the hope that he might provide all that they desire. For many children prayer is about getting things from God rather than developing a personal relationship with him. In today's world, self-sufficiency is praised, so the concept of fully relying on God is increasingly difficult for adults. The good news is that children are used to being dependent, so they more easily take their needs to God. Instead, the challenge for children is recognizing the ways God has blessed them. This lesson aims to help children to know that prayer is a wonderful gift from God, that God is listening, and that he loves to hear their prayers—especially their thanks.

Things to remember when planning and teaching:

- The children likely will know what prayer is and will be familiar with certain types of prayer. A clear emphasis should be placed on the development of personal prayer practices. Communicate that prayer is about having a relationship with God.
- Help the children to understand that prayer should be in response to God's Word, and that praise, petition, confession, and thanksgiving are all part of a praying life.
- Some children may be nervous when praying aloud and in an extemporaneous fashion. It may be useful to encourage the children to begin by writing their prayers down.
- Modeling and demonstrating prayer will be hugely helpful throughout this lesson.
- Remember to mix and match the activities in the lesson to fit your time frame (see p. 12 for some sample outlines). You won't have time to do them all. Feel free to adapt each activity based on your class's strengths and weaknesses.

---

### Leader's Prayer

Loving God, thank you that I can know you in a deep and personal way through your Word and in prayer. Thank you that you delight in having a relationship with

me. Grant the children who hear this lesson a deeper understanding of what prayer is and why you have granted us access to you through prayer. In Jesus's name. Amen.



### Leader's Tool Kit

- Jumbo craft (popsicle) sticks (42)
- A cup
- Timer (cell phone timer will do)
- Markers
- Q38 Question Mark (RB), one per child
- Scissors
- Tape or Sticky Tack
- Paper and stapler
- Whiteboard and marker

### 10 Catechism Recap

*Write numbers one to thirty-seven on the jumbo craft sticks. Place the sticks in a cup with the number side down so the children can't see what they're pulling out. Also place five sticks with the word RESET written on them into the cup. Set a timer for five minutes.*

Invite the children to take turns pulling a stick from the cup. Challenge them to see if they can remember the question and answer

that goes with the number. If they can answer it correctly (don't be too much of a perfectionist!), they get to keep the stick. The person with the most sticks at the end gets a prize. Explain to the children that there's a catch: if someone pulls a RESET stick from the cup, everyone must return their sticks to the cup and start over (but keep the time running). Save the craft sticks to use again with Question 49.

### 5 Introduction to Question 38

*Using the Q38 Question Mark (RB), cut out a question mark for each child.*

Explain to the children that the focus of the lesson is the question "What is prayer?" As part of the introduction to the question, ask the children to write any questions they may have about prayer on the question marks. Stick the question marks up somewhere clearly visible. Assure the children that you'll engage with their thoughts and questions throughout the next few weeks.

Follow by asking the children to think about these questions:

- How did how they get to know their friends and build relationships with them?
- How do they usually communicate with their parents?

Explain to the children that the way people build relationships is by talking to one another. Tell the children that God longs to have a relationship with his people and



## Notes

so he has enabled us to talk to him through prayer. God is not distant or uninvolved in his world or with his people. He is very present and is always listening to the prayers of his people.

Tell the children that prayer is simply talking to God. Explain that when we pray,

we give God his rightful place in our lives. We acknowledge gratefully that he gives and sustains life, and we trust him in all circumstances. In the same way that we build relationships with friends and family through talking, our relationship with God will grow and mature as we spend time talking to him.



### Activity



Give each child a turn to come to the front. Whisper in his or her ear one of the types of communication listed below. They should use motions but no speech to act out the word. When one word is guessed, let another child come up and act out the next word on the list.

- Talking
- Letter
- Email
- Phone call
- Text message

- Facebook
- Skype
- Facetime
- Message in a bottle

Explain to the children that we have many types of communication in the world today; the game included just a small selection. Remind them that God loves to communicate with his people through the Bible and prayer. God speaks to his people through his Word and then invites us to speak in response to him in prayer.



### Teaching Outline

Begin the teaching time by asking for God's help. Ask that the lesson would be taught faithfully and that the children might listen well.

Explain to the children that prayer is an essential part of the Christian life. Yet sometimes Christians don't know how to pray in any way other than bringing lists of wants and needs to God. Ask the children whether they ask their parents for things

they need. Of course, they do! But is that the only thing they ever talk about with their parents? Do they ever tell their parents that they love them or share the interesting things going on in their lives? A good relationship includes many different kinds of communication.

Tell the children that prayer is talking to God, our heavenly Father, in response to his Word.



## Notes

---

**Read Psalm 62.** Invite the children to join you in reading aloud. Provide Bibles for the children.

Explain that this psalm was written by a man named David, who was king in Israel. It is found in the book of Psalms in the Old Testament. Tell the children that in this psalm, David encourages his hearers to pray, and in verse 8 he describes prayer by saying, “Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us.” In this psalm, David encourages God’s people to pour out their hearts to the Lord.

Ask the children what they think pouring out their heart would look like.

Tell them it is telling God everything about our lives and what we are thinking and feeling. Ask the children if this kind of prayer would be easy or hard, and have them elaborate on why they think so.

David isn’t encouraging God’s people to pour out their hearts to just anyone, but to a most amazing God! Have the children search Psalm 62 to identify the different ways David describes God. (A rock, a fortress, a refuge, and the One who saves.)

Tell the children that David builds a picture of a great God who is the completely reliable and trustworthy Creator, in contrast with created people and things (vv. 4 and 10), both of which will disappoint and fail. God longs for honest and regular communication with his children. Help the children to consider what talking with such

a trustworthy God is like. Does it mean they can talk to him at any time and in any place? Does it mean they can tell him anything and everything? This psalm shows David trusting fully in God, and therefore relying fully on his strength.

Tell the children that the way we live is often different from the picture David paints for us. Explain that people rely on themselves, doing things in their own strength, until they can’t do it on their own anymore, and only then they turn to God. David says that if he relies on his own strength, he will be as easy to knock down as a badly built wall, but when he is relying fully on God he will not be shaken. The kind of relationship David has with God brings him rest; he doesn’t have to worry about anything.

Remind the children that prayer is gratefully recognizing that God is God, that he is in control, and that he is completely trustworthy. It is responding to all that we know of and learn about God in his Word, the Bible. When we pray this way, we demonstrate that we trust God to take care of our lives. This is a vital part of a life of faith.

**Finish the teaching time by helping the children commit Question 38 and the answer to memory.**

*(These notes are just for guidance. Please expand or amend them to suit your own children and context. Write out your talk in your own words and include illustrations and applications that you know will connect with your children.)*

**Activity**

*Make a booklet for each child by cutting standard letter-size paper in half (so that it becomes 8.5 x 5.5). Stack five or six sheets together and fold them in half (so that they are now 5.5 x 4). Staple in the fold so that it holds together. Have crayons available.*

Give each child a booklet and tell them it is a prayer journal. Invite them to decorate the cover with crayons, and suggest that they may want to put the phrase “Pour out your hearts to him” on the cover to remind them



what prayer is. Tell them that they can write anything they like in their prayer journals. It is not meant for any eyes besides their own. It is a private place for them to share their thoughts with God.

*Collect the booklets and save them for next week, but assure the children you will not read their prayers. (You may want to make a few extra booklets for any children who might not be in class this week.)*

**Discussion and Question Time**

Some questions that might arise include:

**? If God knows everything, why do we need to pray?**

Explain to the children that prayer is the means God has chosen to allow us to participate in his work. Prayer is a blessing because it allows us to build a relationship with our heavenly Father.

**? Does prayer actually change anything?**

Yes! James 5:16 says, “The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.” We don’t always understand the way that God uses our prayers, and he doesn’t always answer in the way we would expect, but we can joyfully obey his command to pray.

**? Members of other religions pray. What makes Christian prayer different?**

Explain to the children that someone hears us when we pray. Christians pray to the true and living God.

Also use this opportunity to help the children think about their own lives and how this question and answer affects them personally.

- Does the fact that we know God listens to our prayers make a difference when we pray?
- When would be a good time in the day to spend time pouring out their hearts to God?



## Virtue Vision

### Gratitude

*Prepare the whiteboard for a list sixty-two items long. You will probably need to write small and make multiple columns.*

Explain to the children that in a good relationship, we can give thanks for lots of things. Thanksgiving is a kind of prayer in which we express our gratitude to God. In Psalm 62, today's Bible passage, David wrote down the things that caused him to praise God.



Show the children the whiteboard with numbers one through sixty-two. Ask the children to see how many things they, as a group, can come up with that they are grateful for. Can the class make it to sixty-two? To get there, they may need to be very specific about the things they are grateful for. Nothing is too small or insignificant to give thanks for!

## Notes

---

## Memory Activity

*You will need to print the memory verse or catechism question and answer and cut it up into words or phrases (depending on the number of children in the class). Stick the words/phrases under the children's chairs before the lesson begins.*

Read the memory verse or catechism question and answer to the children, and

then explain that there are words or phrases stuck under their seats. Invite the children to get the word from under their seat, and then encourage them to organize themselves so that the memory verse is in the correct order. Read the memory verse for the children as they try to figure out the correct order of the words/phrases. Have the whole class read the verse aloud together several times.

## Closing Prayer Time

Have the children pray quick prayers based on their gratitude list. They can be as simple as "Thank you, Father, for \_\_\_\_." Invite the other children to say "Amen" if they are also grateful for the thing their classmate mentions. (Encourage the children not to

be silly in their prayers, but don't worry too much if they giggle during the prayer time. You are teaching children to pour out their hearts to God, and sometimes children have a lot of silliness in their hearts!)

