

How Do We Pray?



My Prayer Life

Hi! My name is Robert. I'm a fourth grader like you. I want to tell you about my prayer life. This is not unusual, since this is a Sunday School class. If it was a karate class, I'd be telling you about my black belt!

My prayer life started before I was even born. My parents prayed for me. They prayed that I would be born normal, healthy, and all the other things parents want for their children. My grandparents prayed for me, too, as

did my relatives. These were mostly prayers asking for good things for me. The people who prayed them were my intercessors. They talked to God on my behalf.

When I was born all the people I mentioned before prayed for me again. This time the prayers were to thank God that everything turned out all right, and to praise God for making such a perfect human being — me.

Then came my baptismal day. More prayers for me, more requests for more good things were made. My Uncle Pete, who is my godfather, asked for faith, hope, love, and baptism. We have a picture of him holding me on this day.

The next big step in my prayer life was when I learned to talk and my mom started teaching me to say this little prayer before I went to sleep each night: “Now I lay me down to sleep. I pray the Lord my soul to keep. If I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take. If I should live for other days, I pray the Lord to guide my ways. Amen.” It seems sort of babyish now, but it is still a good prayer. I still say it sometimes.

When I was about four years old, I started learning *Jashagestzook*. Each night my family would say it before we ate. One night we would say it in Armenian. The next night we would say it in English. No one was allowed to eat anything until the prayer was said.

I started saying my own made-up prayers when I was five. I used to start as if I was writing a letter. Dear God, ... I prayed about a lot of things. Dear God, thank you for my new dog. Dear God, I love the summer days you make that are hot and just right for swim-

ming. Dear God, I'm sorry I got into an argument with my father. Dear God, help me learn how to ride a two-wheeler without breaking my neck. You know the type of prayers I mean. I still say them now, though, I leave off the “Dear” a lot because now I think of God as a friend and you wouldn't say “Dear Mike” when you start to talk to your friend Mike, would you!

My parents take me to church every Sunday. During the school year, I'm in Sunday School class, of course. But during the summer I have to go to church with my parents, too. When I was little, I used to play with the liturgy books or crawl under the pews. But my dad kept trying to make me pay attention to the service. Little by little I got used to staying in church for 1½ hours. Mom would help me sing the short songs at the right times. Dad would tell me when we were supposed to say the Lord's Prayer so I could say it along with the others. He tried to help me learn to pray along with everyone else. He said that going to church was like going to be with the rest of God's family and we all get to pray for each other. Now that I can read really well, I read along in the liturgy book and think about the people I am praying for. Some of them lived long ago, but because of them there is an Armenian Church today for me.

My prayer life has really grown and changed. I have learned a lot of prayers I like saying. I have made up some of my own that I pray over and over again. Here is one I made up to say each day before I go to school. “God, help me do my best in school today. Help me treat other people the way I want them to treat me. Amen.”

Prayer is a personal thing. Most people feel a little embarrassed talking about their prayer life. It's like sharing a secret you have with a special friend with someone else. But I know my special friend Jesus wouldn't mind my sharing my ideas about prayer with you.



How about you? Can you share your ideas?

1. What is your favorite prayer? (Mine is Hayr Mer.)
2. What is your favorite place to pray? (Mine is in bed.)
3. What is the first prayer you ever learned? (Mine was "Now I Lay Me Down.")
4. What is the newest prayer you learned? (Mine is "Uzliootyoon.")
5. What do you do with your hands when you pray? (I got used to holding them open in the old Armenian style.)
6. Do you close your eyes? (I do, because I like to block out everything else and just concentrate on my prayer.)
7. Do you make up your own prayer? (I do.)
8. Do you feel like you are talking to a special friend when you pray? (I sometimes feel like I am talking to Jesus, sometimes I feel like I am talking to God the Father.)
9. What do you thank God for most of all? (I thank him for letting me appreciate life.)

10. What do you ask God for most often? (I ask him to help me get good marks in school.)

11. What do you praise God for most often? (I praise him for his great food, especially fruit!)

12. What do you ask God to do for others? (I ask God to keep my parents safe.)

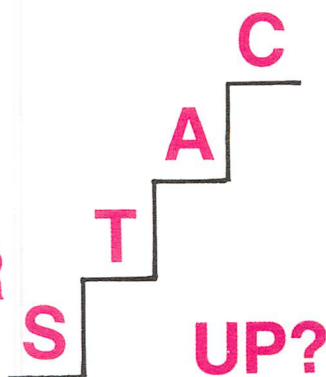
13. What do you ask God to be forgiven for most often? (I ask him to forgive me for being unkind to others. My mom says I have a short temper and I have to work on it.)

14. Do you say your own special prayer when you go to church? (I like to light a candle and say a prayer when I go to church. I usually say a prayer for my grandmother, now. She isn't feeling too well.)

15. Do you sing along with the hymns in church? (I know about five of them that I think are really nice to sing. I'm still trying to understand what they mean.)

16. Do you say the Hayr Mer along with everyone else in church? (I do.)

17. Where did you learn how to pray? (I learned at home.)

**HOW
DOES
YOUR
PRAYER
LIFE ...**  **UP?**

SUPPLICATION means asking. A supplication prayer is one in which you ask God for something for yourself or for someone else. Here is an example of a prayer of supplication:

Lord, help me do well on tomorrow's test. I have studied and done all my homework, but I need your help to get me through the test and do my best. Amen.

THANKSGIVING means thanking. A thanksgiving prayer is one where you thank God for something for yourself or for someone else. Here is an example of a prayer of thanksgiving:

Father, thank you for answering my prayer for help on that test. My mind was clear and I was able to remember all I studied. I know you were with me. Amen.

ADORATION means loving, praising, showing awe, adoring. An adoration prayer is one where you tell God how great he and his works are. Here is an example of a prayer of adoration:

Son of God, I am so happy with the way you have made this day go for me. You calmed my nerves so I could get through the test. I looked up from my paper and saw the teacher smiling at me and I felt as if you, Jesus, were encouraging me to do well. You amaze me, God. Amen.

CONFESSION means feeling sorry and doing something about it. A confession prayer is one where you apologize to God and ask his forgiveness. Here is an example of a prayer of confession:

Holy Spirit, I am sorry that I did not help my friend study for the test when he asked me for help. I wouldn't help him because I was afraid he might do

better than I. I know that was selfish of me. I have apologized to my friend, and now I am apologizing to you. Jesus told us to treat other people the way we would like to be treated. I am sorry I forgot that when I said no to my friend's request for help. Amen.

When you pray, think about what kind of a prayer you are praying. Look at these statements and mark them S, T, A, or C.

1. God, it's a beautiful day!
2. Thank God I didn't fall off my bike around that sharp curve!
3. Jesus, I'm sorry I did that!
4. Please, God, let me hit a homer!

Some prayers are a combination of types. Mark these ST, AT, SC, SA, TC, or AC.

1. Lord, thank you for answering my prayer for my brother. Please help him in his new job.
2. Lord, we have enjoyed the food you have provided for us today. Thank you. Amen.
3. Help me, God, to keep from saying nasty things about people. Forgive me for calling Mary a pest.
4. Help my grandmother get better quickly. I know you have the power to do all things.
5. Lord, I appreciate the way you help me hold my temper when I get into arguments with my brother. Forgive me for picking on him at supper.
6. You made me feel so good, God, when I passed that test. I am sorry I did not study for it as much as I should have.





HOMEWORK: Keeping a Prayer Journal

Every night for at least this one week, write what you pray for on this chart. Do at least one box each night.

| | SUPPLICATION | THANKSGIVING | ADORATION | CONFESSION |
|-----------|--|---|--|---|
| MONDAY | | | | (Example: I asked God to forgive me for hitting my sister.) |
| TUESDAY | (Example: I asked God to help me understand my math homework.) | | | |
| WEDNESDAY | | (Example: I prayed a thank you because my dad almost had a car accident.) | | (Example: I told God I was sorry I forgot to do my chores.) |
| THURSDAY | | | (Example: I praised God for making music which I really enjoy listening to.) | |
| FRIDAY | | | | |
| SATURDAY | | | | |

Unit III: Prayer

Session 1—How Do We Pray?

Key Concepts

1. There are four basic types of prayer: supplication, thanksgiving, adoration, and confession.
2. We pray for ourselves and others as we keep the covenant and share in the Kingdom.

Objectives

Students will

1. Read a story about one child's prayer life.
2. Answer a list of questions about their own prayer life.
3. Identify the four types of prayer and give examples of each. Begin work on the unit project: *A Fourth Grade Book of Prayers*.

Background for Teacher

The Armenian Church is a praying church. Our services are filled with prayers. Our Divine Liturgy incorporates all kinds of prayers. The daily services (nine hours) direct prayers to the Trinity. We, as members of the church, are encouraged to pray continually in our daily life. We have a rich tradition of formal corporate prayer, but also encourage informal personal prayer.

Materials Needed

- Typewriter (optional)
- Paper
- A notebook
- A hole punch
- Magazines to find appropriate pictures to illustrate prayers
- Scissors
- Paste
- Variety of prayer books

Procedure

1. As children enter, check homework. Try to compliment each child, say something positive, give praise.
Begin class with a prayer.
2. Have students open their texts to the new unit, page 49, and identify each praying situation. Discuss. (10 min.)
3. Have students review "My Prayer Life," and discuss. (10 min.)
4. Do the questionnaire about prayer together, allowing the children time to write their answers. Answers need not be shared orally unless the class wishes

to do so. (You will want to read each child's answers to get an indication of strengths and weaknesses in this area. You can do this if you circulate about the children as they write, and read over their shoulders.) (10 min.)

5. Have the children read about the four types of prayer. Quiz them on their knowledge of the names and meanings of these before going on to the activity at the end of this section. (For example: "What is the name of a prayer telling God how great he is?" Explain what a prayer of supplication is, etc.) (10 min.)
6. Do the activity of labeling types of prayers. You may want students to do the first section alone then check answers together. Then have them do the second section aloud together. (5 min.)
7. Begin work on the class unit project: *A fourth grade Book of Prayers*. Have the children look at a variety of prayer books. Let them note prayers they all like and agree should be in their book. Tell the class they may bring in other prayers from home and they may also make up their own prayers to be included in the book. List jobs on the board and have the children think about which ones they want to do: typing, illustrating, collecting pictures from magazines, lettering titles, printing (by hand). The children may suggest other jobs they think might be necessary to compile their book. Prayers will be printed (by hand) or typed—or a combination of both—on notebook paper. When completed, they will go into a notebook binder. A table of contents should be made, as well as a title page listing authors and illustrators; pages should be numbered when the book is complete. (10 min.)
8. Go over the homework instruction together. Be sure the children know exactly what they are to do. Have several children repeat the homework assignment in their own words. (5 min.)
Close class with a prayer.

Extending the Lesson

1. Have the children make two lists: People who pray for me. People I pray for.
2. Have children say the Hayr Mer. (Make notes as to which children will need help with it. Extend this to other prayers you feel the children should know by this age, such as Jashagestzook, Uzliootyoon, Bahaban Amenainee.)
3. Have the children pick prayer-buddies to pray for this week. Have each child write his/her name on a piece of paper and a prayer request.
Example: Harry—Pray for my father to find a good new job. Beth—Pray for me to study each night so

I can pass my spelling test this week.

Next have the children fold their papers and put them in a paper bag. Each child draws one paper out of the bag. They must pray for the person whose paper they draw. If a child selects his/her own, it may be returned to the bag and another drawn.

4. If the class is unfamiliar with the traditional Armenian style of praying with open hands, you may want to practice praying Hayr Mer in this manner.

Session 2—Thy Kingdom Come

Key Concepts

1. The Lord's Prayer is a good example of how to pray.
2. We pray for the Kingdom of God to come, and that our life on this earth reflect the Kingdom.
3. The Kingdom is better than anything we can imagine, but we can only compare it to what we know in this life.

Objectives

Students will

1. Review the Lord's Prayer.
2. Share their concepts of the Kingdom.
3. Examine parables about the Kingdom.
4. Write their own parables of the Kingdom.
5. Continue to work on the unit project.

Procedure

1. As the students enter, check homework. Be sure to say something nice to each child.

Start class with a prayer. (You might want to practice one the children need to learn better or start to teach a new prayer such as *Uskordzus*.) (5 min.)

2. Have the children open their books to page 54, and read the first story together called, "The Lord's Prayer."

Questions for discussion:

- What is the name of the prayer Jesus taught the crowd?
- Who knows how to say it in English? Armenian? (Note which children will need help.)
- What part of the prayer that you know is not in the original prayer Jesus taught? (You might mention that the words, "For thine is . . . forever," are called the doxology, and were added to the Lord's Prayer by the Church.)
- Who is the king of the Kingdom Jesus talks about? (10 min.)

3. Have students review "The Kingdom" on page 55. Do one modern parable together before having them try one on their own. You might need to give them

a couple of examples beyond what the text provides. (20 min.)

4. To reinforce the fact that we pray for the Kingdom to come, read through "Thy Kingdom Come" together, and have students make their list as directed. (10 min.)

5. Continue work on the unit project. (15 min.)

6. *Homework*: Go over directions together to insure that each child knows what to do.

Close with prayer.

Extending the Lesson

Have the children locate other parables and read and discuss them. These will not be about the Kingdom, but they will give the children more experience in understanding parables and this method of teaching that Jesus used.

Session 3—Cry unto the Lord

Key Concepts

1. Psalms are song prayers.
2. Psalms are biblical prayers all Christians use.
3. People of all times and in all nations have offered prayers using psalms.
4. We share in the Kingdom now and with others as is attested to by the 100th psalm.

Objectives

Students will

1. Read a story about psalms and practice chanting antiphonally.
2. Find the Book of Psalms in the Bible and read samples of psalms which show a variety of song prayers.
3. Read a story about how Christians throughout the world use psalms in worship.

Background for Teacher

The Book of Psalms is one of the most-read books in the Bible. It contains songs of praise, thanksgiving, and petition that were part of the worship of the Jews. These songs were sung during services just as we sing the *sharagans* (hymns) today. In fact, some of the hymns in our badarak contain phrases from psalms.

Although intended to be sung or chanted, psalms make excellent oral prayers for group or individual use. Reading through the psalms and finding which are appropriate to your prayer needs is a practice all Christians should develop.

Psalm 100, the psalm studied in this lesson, is very versatile and useful. It is included in the Divine Liturgy (twice during Great Lent) and other services.