Question 40

What should we pray?

Answer

The whole Word of God directs us in what we should pray.

Big Idea
The prayers of God's people should develop in response to God's Word.

Aim
To help the children understand that God's own words in Scripture should inform their prayers.

Bible Passage
Ephesians 3:14–21

Memory Verse
"For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith." (Eph. 3:14–17)

Virtue
Trust

Notes

Leader's Notes

Children learn by example. They emulate the behavior of significant people in their lives. One of the ways that children will learn what to pray is by following the example of others. As a teacher, you must be aware that the children will be observing and imitating your prayers. This lesson will also set biblical examples of prayer before the children on which they may model their personal prayers.

When children begin to pray personally, they sometimes struggle to know what exactly to say. This lesson should help the children to think effectively about what to pray, as it examines some concrete biblical examples.

This lesson should once again encourage the children to have great confidence in our trustworthy God. It should help them to consider what it means to pray according to God's will and for God's glory. Hopefully this lesson will broaden the children's language of prayer and praise.

Things to remember when planning and teaching:

- This is the third lesson focused on prayer; make sure the lesson does not become repetitive.
- The focus of the lesson must be that God teaches his people to pray through his Word.
- Remind the children that God loves to hear his people's prayers.
- 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

Gracious God, please help me to grow in my own prayer life as I spend time in your Word. Grant that the children who hear this lesson may better understand the practice of praying. May they become people who love to spend time with you in your Word and in prayer. In Jesus's name. Amen.

Leader's Tool Kit

- Q40 Catechism Recap (DL)
- Q40 God Speaks to Me (RB), one for each child
- Pens

Catechism Recap

Notes

Print out Q40 Catechism Recap (DL). Mix up the sheets and place them upside down in a grid on the floor.

This is a memory game. Invite the children to come forward and turn over two pieces of paper. The aim of the game is to find a matching question and answer. If no match is found, the pieces of paper are turned back over on the floor. The children must try to remember the details as the pages are turned over so that they can find a match when it comes to their turn. The child with the most matches wins!

Introduction to Question 40

Give each child a copy of Q40 God Speaks to Me (RB).

Introduce Question 40: "What should we pray?" Remind the children that Christians are in a relationship with God, and because of Jesus's death and resurrection, they can come directly to God in prayer. Highlight for the children that prayer is having a conversation with God. The more Christians know and understand God, the easier it will be to know what to pray.

Explain to the children that good conversations go two ways. When we converse with God, he speaks through his Word, and we respond in prayer.

Tell the children that God has already started the conversation with us by speaking to us in his Word. The Bible verses on the page are all things God has said to them.

Activity

Give each child a pen or marker.

Invite the children to respond to the conversation God has started. Have them spend a few minutes writing out prayers in response to each Bible verse from Q40 God Speaks to Me (RB). If it is a command, they may want to ask God to help them keep the command. If it is a promise, they may want to thank God for the promise and claim it for themselves.

Notes

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.

Introduce the children once again to Paul. Paul was a man of prayer, and he recorded many of his prayers in the letters he wrote to God's people. Explain to the children that they will begin to learn what to pray as they study Paul's prayer in Ephesians 3:14–21.

Ask the children to consider what they pray for most often (reassure them that you don't expect them to answer out loud). Tell the children that a great way to find out what someone loves most is by examining what he or she prays.

Read Ephesians 3:14–21. Provide Bibles for the children to read along with you.

Explain to the children that just before Paul prays this prayer in Ephesians 3, he clearly explained God's purpose in his world. That purpose is to draw together a people for himself through Jesus Christ. That's why Paul says, "For this reason" at the beginning of his prayer (v. 13). Because Paul clearly understood God's will, he fell to his knees in prayer for the Ephesian Christians.

Ask the children how they might more clearly understand God's purposes for his world and his people. A right understanding of God's will for his world will fiercely fuel prayer. Help the children to realize that it is through reading God's Word that we understand God's character and mission.

Paul prays that God would help the Ephesian Christians grow in their Christian life, that they would become mature believers. He prays that Jesus would be allowed to rule the hearts of the believers and that he would strengthen them for a lifetime in God's service. It is worth noting to the children that Paul prays to the Father, for the power of the Spirit, and for the sake of the Son.

Paul also prays that the Christians would know the great love that Jesus has for them. Paul wants the Ephesians to know the love of Jesus deep, deep down in their hearts—not just in their heads. And Paul is asking for God's power to help believers understand how wide and long and high and deep the love of Jesus is, because without God's help understanding is limited.

Paul approached God fully trusting that he would hear and answer his prayers (which is the kind of attitude last week's lesson addressed).

Ask the children what this passage teaches us about the content of our prayers.

Finish the teaching time by helping the children commit Question 40 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.)

Notes

10 Activity

Ask the children to line up side by side and put their arms around each other's backs. They will need this support to keep their balance.

Tell the children that people often pray in ways that go *against* what the Bible teaches instead of what the Bible commands. Tell them that you are going to read out some prayers. If the prayer you pray agrees with what the Bible teaches, then they should stand on their right foot. If the prayer goes against something the Bible teaches, then they should stand on their left foot. Make sure everyone knows which is the left foot and which is the right. Practice a few times switching from the right to left foot while supporting one another. Then read out these sample prayers:

- Father, I know I won't be happy unless I can have an American Girl doll, so please give me one. (L)
- Father, help me to be content with what I have. If it would be good for me, I would like a new bike. (R)
- Father, don't let my mom find out that I stole money from her purse. (L)
- Father, forgive me for lying to my dad. Help me to have the courage to confess to him. (R)
- Father, I know you have the power to heal. Please heal my grandmother's pneumonia. (R)
- Father, thank you that it is always your will to heal us. Thank you that if we believe you have healed us, we won't ever need medicine. (L)
- Father, I know you are too busy to be bothered. So I won't ask for your help on the test I am about to take. (L)
- Father, I know that you love me and care about every detail of my life. Would you please send a friend to sit with me at lunch? (R)
- Father, my little sister has messed up my room for the fifth time this week. I know you can't expect me to forgive her. (L)
- Father, help me to forgive my big brother for shouting at me. Help me to remember that because you have forgiven me, I should forgive others. (R)

Notes

(5) Discussion and Question Time

Some questions that might arise include:

? Is it wrong to pray for physical or material things?

> No, God wants us to bring all of our needs and desires to him.

? Must we always copy prayers found in the Bible?

> No, but biblical prayers give us helpful patterns to follow.

? How do we pray for non-Christians?

> Tell the children that the most important thing to pray for non-Christians is that they might trust Jesus for their salvation. Reassure the children that we can and should pray for those outside God's family.

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

- Do they enjoy praying? Praying is a bit like riding a bike. The more you do it, the easier and more enjoyable it becomes.
- How might a greater understanding of the love of Jesus affect their prayers?

(10) Virtue Vision

Trust

Tell the children that James 5:16 says, "Pray for one another." It takes trust to ask someone to pray for you. Read this brief story to the children:

> "What's the matter, Heidi?" Sarah asked. She could tell that Heidi was upset about something. Instead of playing with the other girls, she was sitting in a swing during recess, and she wasn't even swinging!
>
> "Oh, it's kind of embarrassing," said Heidi. "I don't think I want anyone to know."
>
> "You can tell me," said Sarah. "Then I can pray for you about it."
>
> "I guess you're right," Heidi began. "Last night, my mom found lice in my little sister's hair. I'm so embarrassed. I don't have it, but my mom still made me use a special shampoo that smelled really bad. Will you pray that I won't get lice?"
>
> "Sure I will!" said Sarah, and she ran back to her other friends who were sitting on the monkey bars. Heidi felt better until she realized that all the other girls were looking in her direction. Their eyes were wide. Then they started laughing. Sarah had told them about the lice!

Ask the children if Sarah really wanted to pray for Heidi. Was Sarah a trustworthy person? What is the trustworthy way to respond when someone shares a prayer request in confidence?

Notes

10 Memory Activity

Divide the class into two groups. Read the memory verse or catechism question and answer aloud for the children a couple of times.

Each group must come up with a creative way to perform the memory verse or catechism answer. They could perhaps sing it or say it with an accent. They could do some actions or even a mime. Give the children artistic license and see what they come up with!

Conclude by saying the memory verse through again all together.

5 Closing Prayer Time

Pray that the children would be able to learn how to pray effectively as they spend time reading the Bible and that their relationship with God might grow.