

**Prayer and Spirituality**  
**“Let the Children Come to Me”**  
**Jesus and the Children**

GRADES 1-5  
ROTATING WORKSHOPS  
by Jacqueline Nowak, M.A.R.E., C.C.E.  
Memorial United Presbyterian Church, Xenia, Ohio  
2003

**Unit Overview for *Prayer and Spirituality: Jesus and Children***

**Scripture:** (Focus) Mark 10:13-16, also Matthew 19:13-15 and Luke 18: 15-17

**Focus:** Children’s connection to God is affirmed and encouraged as they come to know Jesus as a loving, caring friend.

**Workshops**

Workshop One—Art Workshop  
Workshop Two—Audiovisual Workshop  
Workshop Three—Computer Workshop  
Workshop Four—Drama and storytelling workshop  
Workshop Five—Bible Puzzles And Games Workshop  
Workshop Six—Music and Worship workshop  
Workshop Seven—Cooking Workshop

**Overview: *About Children*** - Children are connected to God. Adults help children give words, symbols to this connection which is innate and is what we mean when we speak of the holiness of children. Relationship and blessing are key ideas which underlie this piece of curriculum. We know that relationship with God best through Jesus.

Children need to be reminded that God’s blessings are theirs – God loves them individually; God claims them (indeed God claims us each, even before we are born).

God makes a claim upon us as God calls and shelters and empowers us – in Jesus, we who are Christian best know God’s love and blessings and what our response is to be to this claim upon us.

Biblical narrative: ***The story of Jesus and the children is told in Matthew, Mark and Luke. It comes in the midst of a continuing narrative, which is moving ever more quickly toward Jerusalem. Crowds of people surround Jesus all the time, as he preaches and teaches, heals and even, argues, with those who come his way. At times he is tired and overwhelmed by the press of people. Yet when the disciples attempt to keep children away from Jesus and therefore discount the value of the children, Jesus is indignant. He chastises any who would keep children from him. For a powerful treatment of Mark 10:13-16, read chapter 2, in Hans-Ruedi Weber’s book, Jesus and the Children. (See the piece being sent you, for which permission has been granted to reprint for the purposes of this curriculum on Jesus Our Special Friend.)***

***About the Mark story:***

The focus story for this curriculum piece is in Mark. Jesus says, “Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the Kingdom of God belongs.” He touches the children and blesses them. These are two critically important aspects of the story and they appear only in Mark.

Children come to know God in a variety of many ways. The story of Jesus and the children is one which children can easily grasp – here Jesus says, “yes, these too, are my people!” They believe

this and love to hear it over and over. Through the story of Jesus as special friend, an exploration of prayer will take place in this unit.

We talk to those with whom we relate and prayer has been one of the main ways human kind has talked with God, through the ages. We gently and appropriately touch too, those for whom we care and we can learn to extend to them God's gracious blessings.

Spiritual practice:

**Prayer** is a primary means by which we nourish our relationship with God and others. We have our own individual ways of praying. Our spiritual lives can be strengthened and deepened by a willingness to explore how others pray and why they pray in these ways.

Just as we adults have a prayer life, so do children. Often they talk to God even if there is no formal religious training occurring in their family life. It is our job as adults, on the journey of faith WITH children, to help them enrich their spiritual life. We do this by learning to listen to and wonder with children. We do this by affirming their innate holiness – their connection with God and encouraging them to use words and symbol, movement, etc to express and deepen this connection. This workshop rotation will use an exploration of prayer as a vital activity which encourages their developing friendship with Jesus, helps them remember their God-connectedness, affirms and supports their spiritual lives and gives them new skills in caring for others.

Be familiar with the varieties of ways to pray, which are part of this curriculum. Try them. Give those, which are new to you a chance and see if they speak to your spirit. Use the prayer style or styles most comfortable as you sit in God's presence; as you share your own joys and concerns; as you pray for others.

Pray daily for the children in your congregation.

***Basic belief:***

In sovereign love God created the world good and made everyone in God's image, male and female, of every race and people, to live as one community...from "A Brief Statement of Faith", lines 29-32

Author's note: This affirms EVERYBODY, even the youngest of the young.

***Catechism Questions 26, 46, 47:***

**Question #26 – What did Jesus do during his life on earth?**

He called disciples to follow him. He fed the hungry, healed the sick, befriended outcasts, required people to repent, and forgave their sins. He taught people not to fear but trust always in God. He preached the good news of God's love and gave everyone hope for new life.

**Question #46 –Why do we pray to God?**

Because we were created to live with God, who desires the prayers of our hearts. Our hearts long for God, for we need God's help and guidance every day.

**Question #47: What do we do when we pray?**

When we pray, we adore God, we confess our sins, we give God thanks, and we pray for the needs of others and ourselves.

**Memory verse:** This story is best retold in the children's words, by the children, rather than having them memorizing a particular verse. See Mark 10:13-16 (TEV).

**Outcomes** (check each workshop for outcomes specific to that learning area):

The children will:

Understand that Jesus is the special friend of children and that children's special connection to God is valued.

Explore ways our relationship with God and Jesus is lived out through prayer.

Talk about what the story of Jesus touching and blessing the children means to them.

Tell stories about how Jesus is their friend.

Practice praying in ways comfortable for each one.

Share joys and concerns and give them to God in prayer.

Talk about being connected to God and how God loves them.

Learn where in the Bible to find the stories of Jesus and the children.

Be able to tell the story of Jesus and the children.

Learn the catechism questions.

Be able to share lines 29-32 in the Brief Statement of Faith.

**Preparation:**

Read the **Unit Overview** material.

Read the 3 Gospel stories of Jesus and the Children. Focus especially upon Mark.

Become familiar with *Jesus Is Our Special Friend*, by Marilyn Perry.

Practice the Blessing and Prayer Ritual for the end of each lesson.

Use the **Spiritual Practice Exercise for Leaders** for your own spiritual preparation.

Become aware of the age characteristics of children and how they learn. Be prepared to adapt the unit for the particular age/developmental level.

Bibliography of background materials for adults:

Barbara Kimes Myers, *Young Children and Spirituality*, Routledge, 1997

Catherine Stonehouse, *Nurturing Children on the Spiritual Journey*, Baker House, 1998.

Claus Westermann, *Blessing in the Bible and the Life of the Church*, Fortress Press, 1978.

Hans-Ruedi Weber, *Jesus and the Children*, Treehaus Communications, 1994.

Leanne Hadley on Spiritual Nurture, [www.1stSteps.net](http://www.1stSteps.net)

Walter Brueggeman on Blessing in Genesis, *Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*, John Knox Press, 1982

Sonya Stewart and Jerome Berryman, *Young Children in Worship*, Westminster, 1989

**About Activities in this Rotation which are Spiritual Exercises**

"Spiritual exercises are not magic. They are simply spiritual disciplines that, if used over time, help children identify and strengthen their spiritual core. These can be as simple as breathing, or as complex as daily writing or drawing daily. The exercises found in this (curriculum) are ones we have found helpful to many children...They will try (some) and if (they) fit, they will be encouraged to practice it."

-the Rev. Leanne Hadley, 1<sup>st</sup> Steps Spirituality Center, Colorado Springs, CO

The prayer activities included here can help children form and give to God their prayers. I have attempted to provide you with many different kinds of possibilities, for there are many different ways of praying. You may want to encourage parents to have prayer time with their children, using the Spiritual Exercises you have chosen.

There are many other possibilities, in addition to those included in the text of this rotation. Some are found in the Resource Cards, for the Covenant People Curriculum, published by the Presbyterian Church USA. Check out your local Presbyterian Resource Center, if you don't have your own set.

In addition, there are a variety of prayer possibilities for working with children of all ages at the First Steps Spiritual Nurture Center web site ([www.1stSteps.net](http://www.1stSteps.net)). Check these out, for more choices.

### ***Closing Prayer and Blessing Ritual***

This Closing Ritual is a period of Worship, a way of being with God. We begin by lighting a candle, the light from which reminds us of the presence of God. Sometimes we speak, sometimes we listen. Children and adults are given quiet sacred space in which to pray prayers of praise and request. Then the children each receive a blessing – not the adult's Blessing, but the Blessing of God, extended by the caring adult.

The Blessing is a way of sending each child, individually, with an affirming word, a benediction. This good word affirms the personal worth of the child, who is called by name, the love God has for that child and the fact that each of us is claimed by the One Who loves us.

It is our prayer that God and the safety and nurture experienced in Christian Education classes will be felt by each child, as he or she goes out into every time and every place. As God goes with each one of us, we are enabled to go in peace to love and serve our God.

This ritual helps children understand too, that God, Whose presence we know in the sanctuary, during our worship services, is not bound to that place. God is with us always.

### ***Closing Prayer and Blessing Ritual*** ***Suggested Narrative***

Gather and settle in on around a worship center.

The worship center can be placed on a box on the floor or on a low table. Cover the base of your center with a white cloth. Put on it a nice (something special) candle, a brass candle lighter and snuffer, if you have one; a (children's) Bible. Set the worship center up in an area of your workshop room which is set aside for this special time.

Say: "This is a very special place and you can walk more slowly and talk more quietly as you come here. Some people are talking with God. God is here and you have come to listen for God and talk to God. You can get quiet all by yourself, for the quiet comes from inside you. Let's listen for the quiet."

Light the candle with the candle lighter (you may need a match), while saying:

LEADER: "The Lord be with you."

CHILDREN: "And also with you."

If you are comfortable, sing "Jesus Loves Me" or "Be Still and Know That I Am God", which are included in your materials. Notice the change of wording in *Jesus Loves Me*.

Prayers:

The children share their joys and concerns. Individual children telling of a concern are given the opportunity to say the prayer themselves. Then the Leader prays, repeating the ideas expressed, adding joy for blessings, thankfulness for the teachers, classmates, school, the church, etc and concern for that which "makes us mad or sad, worried or scared." Remember to include the faith statement that God is always with us. (Prayer needs to be short; stop when or before shuffling begins.)

NOTE: One aim of prayer time with children should be to provide them with opportunities for praying. This ritual give them time for silent prayer. If you have time, it would be good to allow each child to offer his/her own prayer for that, which is a blessing and/or a concern. Ask the child to say "Amen" when he/she is finished praying.

As leader you can do the closure of the prayer time.

Song: "Friend Jesus Be Our Holy Guest" (included in your materials)

Blessing the children: (next page)

**Blessing the children:**

Each child comes forward and the leader whispers a blessing in his/her ear, using the child's name.

If the child prefers, speak quietly to him while looking into his eyes.

Say slowly, prayerfully and poetically:

“(NAME), God created you;  
God loves you,  
God is with you.  
God blesses you.”

Note: The children may be offered Blessing Balm or Blessing Powder, with the words, “when you see/smell this, remember that God is always with you, wherever you are.”

Blessing Balm can be of many types. One pleasant type is roll-on scented sparkle gel, available at Kroger stores and also Bath and Body Works. People of all ages like it.

**Gentle reminder:** Be sure to ask before putting anything on anyone!

End with, “Go be with God,” as the child leaves you.

**About appropriate touch:**

Touch is an important human connection. Do touch the child's arm or shoulder or hold her hand as you and she are comfortable. If the child trusts you he may lean on you, as you bless him. Do “let the children come unto” you. There is always going to be at least one other adult with you during Chapel.

**For Parents and Other Caregivers:**

Make copies of the overview (including Catechism Questions, Basic Belief, Memory Verse, Spiritual Practice and Prayer and Blessing Ritual).

Give parents an opportunity to meet before this workshop begins, for a few minutes.

Go over these materials with them.

Encourage families to continue the Prayer and Blessing Ritual at home; to talk about the stories of Jesus and the Children; to work with the catechism questions, basic belief and memory verse. You might suggest that families begin an album of Sunday School materials which they can refer to over the year.

**About the daily schedule for this rotation – with minimum times allotted**

Gathering and Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

Bible Story (10 minutes)

Activity (15 minutes)

Closing Prayer and Blessing Ritual (10 minutes)

Clean-up (5 minutes)

If you have more than 45 minutes of class time, add time to the discovery of and wondering about the Bible story, the prayers of joys and concerns time, then the activity time.

About teaching the Bible story

1<sup>st</sup> week: Read the story in Marilyn Perry's book, *Jesus Is Our Special Friend*, Wood Lake Books, 1993. Available from Logos Publications, Minneapolis, MN Tell the children the story is found in 3 of the 4 Gospels in the Bible. Have a Bible with you.

Wonder about the story: how it would feel to be there; what the children wanted from Jesus; what their reactions might have been to the words of the Disciples....

2<sup>nd</sup> week: Read the stories in the Gospels. Have the children find each one with you. Read Mark's story last.

Wonder about-

how the children felt in the story.

how those who brought them felt.

what the Disciples must have been thinking.

the fact that Jesus was indignant!

Talk about how the stories are alike and different. Do not give the children answers. Listen to and accept their ideas about the stories.

3<sup>rd</sup> week: Read the story again in Mark's Gospel.

Talk about how it would feel to have Jesus lay his hands upon a person. Talk about "blessing".

Would you like to be blessed by Jesus? How would that be like or different from our closing ritual of blessing?

4<sup>th</sup> week: Have the children find the stories in the Bible and read or retell them.

Each week, continue with wondering and exploring how the stories are speaking to the children.

### **Workshop 1-- Art Workshop**

**Scripture:** (Focus) Mark 10:13-16, Matthew 19:13-15, Luke 18: 15-17

**Focus:** Children's connection to God is affirmed and encouraged as they come to know Jesus as a loving, caring friend.

#### **Objectives:**

The children will:

Understand that Jesus is the special friend of children and that children's special connection to God is valued.

Explore ways our relationship with God and Jesus is lived out through prayer.

Talk about what the story of Jesus touching and blessing the children means to them.

Prepare prayer reminders, which help them pray in ways comfortable for each one.

Share joys and concerns and give them to God in prayer.

Talk about being connected to God and how God loves them.

Learn where in the Bible to find the stories of Jesus and the children.

Be able to tell the story of Jesus and the children.

#### **What You Need**

Bibles

Lesson material, including Overview and Closing Prayer and Blessing Ritual

Worship Center items, set up ahead of time

Name tags (or be sure you know each child's name!)

*Jesus is Our Special Friend* by Marilyn Perry

Materials for the project you have chosen to do (see below)

#### *Preparation*

Become familiar with your material, including the overview and spiritual practice for leaders, as well as children.

Practice the Closing Prayer and Blessing Ritual until you are comfortable with it.

Thank God the opportunity to be with the children and pray for God's guidance.

Gather the materials for the project you have chosen.

Set up the worship center.

## **Workshop 1-- Art Workshop, cont.**

### **What You Do**

Greet the Children. Be sure that you know each child's name, using name tags, if that is your way.

Pray with the children, after you have gathered everyone together. You might begin your prayer, "Creator God" or "God, Our Creator"...

Hear the Story. See **About Teaching the Bible Story** in the Introduction section.

Do a Prayer Reminder Project (there are some possibilities included in this curriculum and also in the supplemental materials)

*Closing Prayer and Blessing Ritual* (See Introduction portion of this curriculum).

Clean Up at the end of the class. Have the children help with the clean up.

### **Things to Make Activities:**

#### **Prayer Reminder Boxes**

##### What you need:

For each child –

School toolbox

Play sand

Small candle

A variety of small objects, such as shells, stones, marbles, twigs, stuff

##### What you do:

1. Talk about praying as a way to deepen our friendship with Jesus (with God). Let the children tell you about ways and times and places they pray. As you talk, pass out the boxes, a plastic zip lock bag of sand (enough to fill the box an inch or two), and the small candle (a tea light size fits well in the box with the lid down). Put the variety of objects in the center of your work space. Be sure you have enough supplies so that you also make a Prayer Reminder Box. Don't just tell, but show the children a way of prayer which you are trying.

2. Tell the class that they can give God their prayers by forming the prayer in the sandbox, which you can put together now. Let them choose objects to include in their prayer reminder box. Suggest that the candle can represent God or the light of God or Jesus, to Whom they give their prayer.

*Gentler Reminder.* If a child chooses to make the candle represent someone or something else, this is not wrong. Trust that the children will know what should be in the box for their praying, even if it is not until later, that the objects they choose and the prayers they form become meaningful for them. It is also possible that this type of prayer will NOT fit a child's needs/personality. This is OK, too.

3. Encourage them to each think about a prayer they would like to give to God and then make the prayer in the box with objects they choose. Volunteers might want to share their

prayers, but do not make this a focus of the activity – the praying is primarily the building of the vertical relationship – child and God.

For example: A child put a candle in the center of her box and ringed it with small stones. She put another pebble at the edge of the box. Her prayer was that God would give her a friend so she would not feel left out and alone at school. She prayed this prayer over time and the "outsider" stone moved closer and closer to the others. Once it was touching the ring of stones, she felt she was "done" with the prayer and the issue of concern. She had found a friend and God had been with her in the time of difficulty.

4. Have the children take their boxes home. Encourage them to use them for prayer. Send a note home for parents explaining this Spiritual Exercise.

## **Praying with Thanksgiving for Our Bodies**

### What you need:

Body-size pieces of roll paper, one for each child  
Markers or crayons

### What you do:

Talk about our whole selves as being connected to God. God gave us our bodies and we can praise God with our bodies.

Talk too, about Jesus as the friend of children in the Bible story and as the friend to EACH of us.

Have each child lie down on his/her piece of paper, as an adult or teen draws around the body. Thank God for each part of the child's body as you draw.

Example: "God, we thank you for Sarah's head; for her smile and her strong arms...For her legs which run fast..."

Let the children decorate themselves and take the figures home to remind them:

They can give thankful prayers of praise to God with all of who they are.

They are each, befriended by and a friend of Jesus.

## **Prayer Beads**

### What you need:

A variety of **beads** of your choice, with large center holes.

NOTE: We like to use plastic pony beads and narrow ribbon for this project.

**Ribbon**, narrow enough to easily thread through the beads, will be 1/8 or 1/4 inch wide for easiest threading.

**Charms**, in the shape of children, Bibles, crosses, shells, etc for the ends of the Prayer Beads can be found at [www.fancifuls.com](http://www.fancifuls.com)

### What you do:

Give each child a piece of ribbon, about 2 feet long. For YOUNGER children, the leader should put a knot in the middle of the ribbon, making the ribbon into two separate strands. OLDER children can do this whole process alone, with help assistance as they request.

Talk about how prayer beads can be used to remember and count blessings; to pray for a particular person or problem, over and over for a number of times; to pray for Fruits of the Spirit one might want to be a better friend of Jesus; to remember a prayer such as the Lord's Prayer or a Psalm; etc.

Have each child choose the number of beads he/she wants on the string.

*Gentle Reminder:* 3 (the Trinity, thought of in biblical times as a perfect number); 5 (a number easily managed in terms of memorizing); 7 (and on the 7<sup>th</sup> day God rested, another biblical number seen as perfect and occurring often). 3, 5 and 7 are all numbers of things easily remembered also, according to brain researchers.

Thread the beads like you would lace a shoe. Put one lace through a bead from the left and one from the right side of the same bead. Add another bead by bringing the new left lace through the 2<sup>nd</sup> bead to the right and the new right side lace through the second bead toward the left. Continue until all beads are threaded. The drawn instructions are available from the writer of this piece. Email [Jackie@donet.com](mailto:Jackie@donet.com), if you can't figure out how to do this.

Knot the 2 laces together with enough empty ribbon space to allow a good pull feel.

(There should be at least as much unbeaded ribbon space as there is beaded ribbon.)

If you purchase little treasure charms, they can be attached at the ends of the Prayer Beads.

Remind the children to pray with their beads regularly.

## **Prayer Reminder Strings**

### What you need:

Buttons, wooden spools, wooden disks with a hole in the middle

**Ribbon**, narrow enough to easily thread through the buttons, etc will be 1/8 or ¼ inch wide for easiest threading.

**Charms**, in the shape of children, Bibles, crosses, shells, etc for the ends of the Prayer Reminder Strings can be found at [www.fancifuls.com](http://www.fancifuls.com)

Give each child a piece of ribbon, about 2 feet long. For YOUNGER children, the leader should put a knot in the middle of the ribbon, making the ribbon into two separate strands. OLDER children can do this whole process alone, with help assistance as they request.

Talk about how these prayer reminders can be used to remember and count blessings; to pray for a particular person or problem, over and over for a number of times; to pray for Fruits of the Spirit one might want to be a better friend of Jesus; to remember a prayer such as the Lord's Prayer or a Psalm; etc.

Have each child choose the number of buttons, etc he/she wants on the string.

*Gentle Reminder*: 3 (the Trinity, thought of in biblical times as a perfect number); 5 (a number easily managed in terms of memorizing); 7 (and on the 7<sup>th</sup> day God rested, another biblical number seen as perfect and occurring often). 3, 5 and 7 are all numbers of things easily remembered also, according to brain researchers.

Thread the buttons, etc like you would lace a shoe. Put one lace through a button from the Left and one from the right side of the same button. Add another button by bringing the new left lace through the 2<sup>nd</sup> bead to the right and the new right side lace through the second button toward the left. Continue until all buttons are threaded. The drawn instructions are available from the writer of this piece. Email [Jackie@donet.com](mailto:Jackie@donet.com), if you can't figure out how to do this.

Knot the 2 laces together with enough empty ribbon space to allow a good pull feel.

(There should be at least as much empty ribbon space as there is buttoned ribbon.)

If you purchase little treasure charms, they can be attached at the ends of the Prayer Reminder Strings.

Remind the children to pray with their Reminders regularly.

### **Other Activities are found on Covenant People Resource "Prayer" Cards**

For example:

Two Prayer Reminders

Door hanger and magnet to make to remind us to pray.

Covenant People Resource Card A87

Another Art Activity: Make Kingdom of God prayer meditation pictures. Let the children draw their own pictures, frame them and take them home to help them remember to pray regularly as they grow in their friendship with Jesus.

### **Workshop 2—THEATER WORKSHOP AUDIOVISUAL WORKSHOP**

**Scripture:** (Focus) Mark 10:13-16, Matthew 19:13-15, Luke 18: 15-17

**Focus:** Children's connection to God is affirmed and encouraged as they come to know Jesus as a loving, caring friend.

#### **Objectives:**

The children will:

Understand that Jesus is the special friend of children and that children's special connection to God is valued.

Talk about what the story of Jesus touching and blessing the children means to them.

Tell stories about how Jesus is their friend.  
Share joys and concerns and give them to God in prayer.  
Talk about being connected to God and how God loves them.  
Learn where in the Bible to find the stories of Jesus and the children.  
Be able to tell the story of Jesus and the children.

### **What You Need**

Bibles

Lesson material, including Overview and Closing Prayer and Blessing Ritual

Worship Center items, set up ahead of time

Name tags (or be sure you know each child's name!)

Popcorn, popper, beverages, cups, and serving bags (optional)

Audiovisual equipment

Video suggestions:

*Are You My Neighbor?* Veggie Tales (10 minute portion story of the Flubber-a-loos)

*Jesus and His Kingdom*, Oxford Vision Video (5 minutes, entitled People Jesus Met)

*Jesus the Friend*, in God's Story, Mass Media Ministries (410-727-3270); (7 minutes, this is the best of the lot for it shows the most respect for the relationship of Jesus to children.)

Journal for each child (see Preparation)

### *Preparation*

Become familiar with your material, including the overview and spiritual practice for leaders, as well as children.

Practice the Closing Prayer and Blessing Ritual until you are comfortable with it.

Prepare a theater ticket with the heading Jesus is Our Special Friend. Include the Mark 10:13-16

Locate the video you will use. Preview the film.

Decide how you want to begin your conversation with the children.

Examples - ways the video they saw shows Jesus-like friendship (Veggie Tales); their feelings and thoughts about Jesus and the children in *Jesus the Friend* (God's Story: The New Testament) or *People Jesus Met* (Jesus and the Kingdom).

If your group does not already have journals, assemble one for each child by folding numerous blank sheets of 8 ½-inch x 11-inch paper in half. Staple in the centerfold. Once made, these journals can be used all year.

Thank God the opportunity to be with the children and pray for God's guidance.

Set up the worship center.

### **What You Do**

Greet the Children and be sure to know each one's name. If needed, use nametags.

Prepare for the Theater. Pass out tickets and popcorn, if that is part of your plan.

Pull the group together by your words or gather in a space away from the "theater seats". Pray with the children, asking God to open our ears and eyes to God's word.

Read the Story. See **About Teaching the Bible Story** in the Introduction section.

Introduce the Video. Give the children ideas of what to look for.

Show the Video.

Discuss the Presentation. Relate the story to your previous conversation about Jesus as a special friend of children in His time and today.

Respond to the Presentation. Have the children respond to the film by journaling; writing about what they saw and what they learned and or how they felt.

Closing Prayer and Blessing Ritual (See Introduction portion of this curriculum).

Clean Up. Have the children help in cleaning up the area.

### **WORKSHOP 3---COMPUTER WORKSHOP**

**Scripture:** (Focus) Mark 10:13-16, Matthew 19:13-15, Luke 18: 15-17

**Focus:** Children's connection to God is affirmed and encouraged as they come to know Jesus as a loving, caring friend.

**Objectives:** The children will:

Understand that Jesus is the special friend of children and that children's special connection to God is valued.

Explore ways our relationship with God and Jesus is lived out through prayer.

Talk about what the story of Jesus touching and blessing the children means to them.

Find pictures on-line of Jesus as friend of children (and others).

Talk about being connected to God and how God loves them.

Learn where in the Bible to find the stories of Jesus and the children.

Be able to tell the story of Jesus and the children.

#### **What You Need**

Bibles

Lesson material, including Overview and Closing Prayer and Blessing Ritual

Worship Center items, set up ahead of time

Name tags (or be sure you know each child's name!)

Set up the worship center.

#### *Preparation*

Become familiar with your material, including the overview and spiritual practice for leaders, as well as children.

Practice the Closing Prayer and Blessing Ritual until you are comfortable with it.

Become familiar with the computers and the software.

Recruit helpers to work with children who are learning to read.

Be sure computers are turned on and software is loaded before the children arrive.

Thank God the opportunity to be with the children and pray for God's guidance.

#### What You Do

Greet the children, being sure to know each one's name. If needed, use nametags. Make certain the children know what you want to be called, too.

Gather the group together and pray with the Children. Ask that God may open your eyes and ears to God's word.

Read the Scripture. See **About Teaching the Bible Story** in the Introduction section.

If you have access to Bible software on CD-ROM, you may want to have the children look up the scripture on the computers.

Talk about ways we live out our friendships. Accept each child's ideas about this. Wonder about how we deepen our friendship with Jesus (with God). If the children do not raise it, suggest prayer as a way we can do this. Let the children share the kinds of things they pray about. Talk about how people pray (bowed heads, hands up in the air, eyes open or closed, etc).

Introduce your activity

Work on Computers. See Activity Suggestions.

Closing Prayer and Blessing Ritual (See Introduction portion of this curriculum).

Clean up together. Shut Down the Computers.

#### **Activity suggestions for Computer Lab:**

1. Use the CD, Say Your Prayers with Angelina (available through Sunday School Software, [www.sundaysoftware.com](http://www.sundaysoftware.com)).

Prepare for buying and using by going to <http://www.sundaysoftware.com/angelina.htm>.

While this is most appropriate for YOUNGER children, if you have a lot of time and

your older ones are finished with the project and others are still working, let the OLDER students tell you what they think of this CD.

#### 2. Make a Children's Prayers CD

Let each child (or small group of children) write and illustrate a prayer. Put the prayer and illustration on a disk. Ask someone in your congregation with the capability to put all the prayers on a CD. Make a copy for each child and have a couple of extras around. Play the CD during a Fellowship time, for the whole congregation.

#### 3. Write and Illustrate Prayers

If you do not have the ability to do the CD making, you can still have each child write and illustrate his/her own prayers. Use KidsPix Deluxe 3 (see Sunday School Software, [www.sundaysoftware.com](http://www.sundaysoftware.com) to preview this CD and find printable Adobe Acrobat Teaching Tips); a paint program or Word. Have each child make two copies of his/her prayer – one to take home and one to hang on a bulletin board for all to see and learn from.

#### 4. Find People for Whom to Pray.

Use the Internet to find pictures of people who Jesus would befriend. Find pictures of those who need Jesus' special friendship. How can we be friends to these people? Have each child choose one picture to caption with a prayer and print. Make 2 copies one to hang and one to take home. Encourage the children to keep their picture at the dinner table, in the car, somewhere they will see it regularly and ask them to help their family pray for this person.

Other Possible Computer Lab Activities:

Kingdom of God – find pictures of the Kingdom of God. Print and make a bulletin board.

Friends of Jesus – find people being friends of Jesus. Print and make captions. Put up a bulletin board. Or have each child make his/her own book.

Being a friend through prayer – write and illustrate a prayer card for someone particular.

Images of Jesus with children and captions: See Friends of Jesus.

Letters to Jesus – Make a bulletin board with letters from each child to Jesus. Include the child's name and picture, if possible, along with the letter.

*Gentle Reminder:* Include on your bulletin board the words you are using at Blessing at the end of your workshop.

### **WORKSHOP 4---DRAMA AND STORYTELLING WORKSHOP**

**Scripture:** (Focus) Mark 10:13-16, Matthew 19:13-15, Luke 18: 15-17

**Focus:** Children's connection to God is affirmed and encouraged as they come to know Jesus as a loving, caring friend.

#### **Objectives:**

The children will:

Understand that Jesus is the special friend of children and that children's special connection to God is valued.

Explore ways our relationship with God and Jesus is lived out through prayer.

Talk about what the story of Jesus touching and blessing the children means to them.

Practice praying in ways comfortable for each one.

Talk about being connected to God and how God loves them.

Learn where in the Bible to find the stories of Jesus and the children.

Practice telling the story of Jesus and the children.

### ***What You Need***

Bibles

Lesson material, including Overview and Closing Prayer and Blessing Ritual

Worship Center items, set up ahead of time

Name tags (or be sure you know each child's name!)

Set up the worship center.

Thank God the opportunity to be with the children and pray for God's guidance.

### ***Preparation***

Become familiar with your material, including the overview and spiritual practice for leaders, as well as children.

Practice the Closing Prayer and Blessing Ritual until you are comfortable with it.

Pray for God's guidance.

### ***What You Do***

Greet the Children. As the children arrive, welcome them to the workshop. If needed, use name tags. Be sure they know what you wish to be called, too.

Gather the group together and pray with the Children. Invite the children to join you in sentence prayers.

Read the Scripture. See **About Teaching the Bible Story** in the Introduction section.

Do a Drama/Storytelling Activity. Take your time and have fun with what you choose.

Discuss the Story, after your activity. Do the children have new ideas about the story to share?

Closing Prayer and Blessing Ritual (See Introduction portion of this curriculum)

Clean up together before dismissal.

### ***Drama/Puppet Workshop Activities***

#### ***Act out the story***

##### What You Need:

Bibles

costumes

##### What You Do:

Take the Mark story apart and let each child be a person in the story.

Act it out, with the children speaking the lines of the story. (They needn't memorize the particular words. The value comes in their living the idea of the story.)

Talk about the story before and after acting it out.

Let different children choose to be different characters in the story.

Wonder about who brought the children to Jesus (mom, dad, older siblings?)

Do the story as a skit in worship, with the children saying the lines of one reading the Story, while the others act it out.

#### ***Dance a prayer***

##### What You Need:

Streamers

Taize or lullaby music, or something quietly classical.

##### What You Do:

Put on quiet meditative music.

Have the children listen to the music sitting down.

Ask them if they'd like to move to the music, sitting or standing.

Play the piece again, giving the opportunity to move as the Spirit moves them.

Hand out streamers and play the same or a different piece of music. Let them move to it using the streamers.

*Gentle Reminder:* This is the type of activity which takes modeling by the adults in the room.

Don't try this, if you are uncomfortable dancing with the children.

### **Puppets act out story**

What You Need:

Puppets

What You Do:

See Acting Out the Story

### **Prayer styles practice**

What You Need:

Nothing other than each one

What You Do:

Practice a variety of prayer practices, which take no equipment. You can find a booklet of possibilities at [www.1stSteps.net](http://www.1stSteps.net) under Resources, "free resource".

Give the children time to try the prayer disciplines and to talk about how they felt doing the different kinds of praying.

Suggest they pick one which felt good to them and practice praying that way in the next week. The Shepherd can begin the next week by talking about how the praying went the week before.

### Other Drama/Puppet Prayer Activities

Talk about and Practice Open-Eyed Prayers  
Covenant People, Resource Card P1

God Loves Me Prayer  
Covenant People, Resource Card P15

The Lord's Prayer with Motions  
Covenant People, Resource Card P4

### ***WORKSHOP 5—TEMPLE SCHOOL BIBLE PUZZLES AND GAMES WORKSHOP***

**Scripture:** (Focus) Mark 10:13-16, Matthew 19:13-15, Luke 18: 15-17

**Focus:** Children's connection to God is affirmed and encouraged as they come to know Jesus as a loving, caring friend.

#### **Objectives:**

The children will:

Understand that Jesus is the special friend of children and that children's special connection to God is valued.

Explore ways our relationship with God and Jesus is lived out through prayer.

Talk about what the story of Jesus touching and blessing the children means to them.

Tell stories about how Jesus is their friend.

Learn where in the Bible to find the stories of Jesus and the children.

Learn the catechism questions.

Be able to share lines 29-32 in the Brief Statement of Faith.

#### ***What You Need***

Bibles

Lesson material, including Overview and Closing Prayer and Blessing Ritual

Worship Center items, set up ahead of time

Name tags (or be sure you know each child's name!)

Variety of puzzles and games  
Index cards  
Pencils

#### *Preparation*

Become familiar with your material, including the overview and spiritual practice for leaders, as well as children.

Practice the Closing Prayer and Blessing Ritual until you are comfortable with it.

Thank God the opportunity to be with the children and pray for God's guidance.

Set up the worship center.

#### **What You Do**

Greet the Children by name. Be sure they know what to call you, too. If needed, use name tags.

Gather the class together and pray with the children, thanking God for each person present.

Read the Scripture. See **About Teaching the Bible Story** in the Introduction section.

Choose some of the Activities to do with the students.

Closing Prayer and Blessing Ritual (See Introduction portion of this curriculum).

Clean up. Have the children help in cleaning up the area.

#### **Activities for Temple School**

##### **Memorize the Basic Belief and Catechism Questions**

The Catechism Questions can be taught us the materials, published for this purpose by the denomination.

Ways of helping children memorize:

Do this as a group project, so everyone is able to participate and no one is put on the spot.

Write phrases on sentence strips or cardstock. Scatter them on the floor and let the children put them together in the right order.

Read together.

Scatter and offer to let one or two see how fast they can put them in order. Let other teams try, too. Give help as needed.

##### **Practice listening and sharing prayer concerns**

Take time for an extended period of sharing joys and concerns.

Practice listening – for how can we know God, if we don't listen for God's voice in our prayers? ....

##### **Writing own prayers**

Talk about joys and concerns and about how our friendship with God (Jesus) is deepened by praying. Include a discussion of people who we need to pray for, in order to be better friends of Jesus.

Give the children nice pieces of paper on which to write their own prayers to God.

Alternatives:

Date and envelope

Kerplunk it

Let go of it – flash paper

##### **Praying in Our Church**

Visit different areas in the church and pray together with the children.

Don't choose only the worship areas.

Can you find a peaceful place to make a prayer space?

Can you prayer together in a busy space?

Could you pray alone in the middle of a crowd of people? Why? Why not?

Talk about what the children think is needed to make any space sacred, where a person can feel comfortable in prayer.

I wonder if it needs to be light (or dim)?

If there should be a window?  
Pictures to look at or a blank wall?

Talk about how different people find different spaces comfortable for prayer.

Wonder too about how the spaces for prayer might be different depending upon whether a person is happy or sad, mad or sacred...

### **Electronic Game Board**

Put parts couplets of the memory verse and basic belief, catechism questions on little pieces of card stock. Use an Electronic Board for the children to match up the parts.

### **Talk about prayer and being with Jesus**

**Practice breath prayer, feather prayer, listening stones and prayers**

**Sonya Stewart's Jesus and the Children story**

## ***WORKSHOP 6--MUSIC AND WORSHIP WORKSHOP***

**Scripture:** (Focus) Mark 10:13-16, Matthew 19:13-15, Luke 18: 15-17

**Focus:** Children's connection to God is affirmed and encouraged as they come to know Jesus as a loving, caring friend.

### **Objectives:**

The children will:

Understand that Jesus is the special friend of children and that children's special connection to God is valued.

Explore ways our relationship with God and Jesus is lived out through prayer.

Talk about what the story of Jesus touching and blessing the children means to them.

Talk about being connected to God and how God loves them.

Learn where in the Bible to find the stories of Jesus and the children.

Be able to tell the story of Jesus and the children.

### **What You Need**

Bibles

Lesson material, including Overview and Closing Prayer and Blessing Ritual

Worship Center items, set up ahead of time

Name tags (or be sure you know each child's name!)

### *Preparation*

Become familiar with your material, including the overview and spiritual practice for leaders, as well as children.

Practice the Closing Prayer and Blessing Ritual until you are comfortable with it.

Thank God the opportunity to be with the children and pray for God's guidance.

Set up the worship center.

### **What You Do**

Greet the Children, calling them by name and making sure they know what to call you, too. Use name tags, if necessary.

Pray with the Children, after you have gathered together. You might open with Be Still and Know That I Am God, included in your packet.

**gentle reminder--**Some children enjoy and are comforted by the repetition of the same songs over and over. Repetition is also one way children. You are building Faith Literacy with the songs you teach, so choose carefully so that the songs have meaning for your particular congregation.

Read the Scripture. See **About Teaching the Bible Story** in the Introduction section.

Sing some of the suggested songs.

Talk about the meanings the children find in the songs, as they relate to the story of Jesus as friend and to prayer – one way we talk to God and Jesus.

Closing Prayer and Blessing Ritual (See Introduction portion of this curriculum).

Clean up together. Send the children off with words to the songs you sang.

### **Songs for Music Rotation**

#### **BE STILL AND KNOW THAT I AM GOD**

Included in your packet

This is a lovely and easily learned piece of music, written originally by the Taize' Community and found in the book *Sing With Joy* by Treehaus Communications, Inc. Permission has been granted to share this piece by GIA Publications (by Les Presses de Taize) exclusive agent. All rights reserved. Reprinted with permission to copy this one piece for use only with this curriculum.

Purchasing this book of children's songs is highly recommended: [www.treehaus.com](http://www.treehaus.com)

1-800-638-4287

#### **JESUS LOVES THE LITTLE CHILDREN**

Jesus loves the little children

All the children of the world

Red and yellow, black and white,

They are precious in His sight.

Jesus loves the little children of the world.

#### **SPIRIT SONG w 3<sup>rd</sup> verse as below**

The Spirit Song is found in many contemporary songbooks. If your church has a CCLI license, you have permission to copy the music. The new 3<sup>rd</sup> verse and its companion refrain:

Oh come be blessed by God Who loves you,  
By this one who knows your name.  
Remember that God made you for God's own.  
Be open to God's blessing,  
Receive the gentle touch,  
Come now to one who loves you very much.

Jesus and Spirit,  
God is heaven above;  
Bless this child before you,  
Bless this child with love.

#### **SEEK YE FIRST**

Seek ye first

The Kingdom of God

And God's righteousness.

And all these things will be added unto you

A-le-lu, A-le-lu-ia

-Jacqueline Nowak, Memorial United Presbyterian Church, Xenia, Ohio, 2003

#### **JESUS LOVES ME\* (adapted by Nowak)**

Jesus loves me

This I know,

For the Bible

Tells me so.  
Little ones to Him belong;  
They are frag-ile, He is strong.

Yes, Jesus loves me;  
Yes, Jesus loves me;  
Yes, Jesus loves me;  
The Bible tells me so.

JESUS LOVES ME\* (adapted by McQuire\*\*)

Another set of very nice adapted words are on the back cover of "Jesus Our Special Friend" by Marilyn Perry.

\*Original words were written by Anna Bartlett Warner (1822-1915)

\*\*Rewritten by David Rutherford McQuire (1929-1971)

Use by permission of Mrs. Cherie McQuire

FRIEND JESUS BE OUR HOLY GUEST  
Sung to Tallis Canon (in PCUSA hymnal 535)

Friend Jesus be our Holy Guest;  
Our morning joy, our evening rest.  
May this time with You impart,  
Your love and peace to every heart.

God's Precious Child  
(apologies to Shaina Noll)  
lullaby tune *All Through the Night*

Peace be with you, oh my dear one  
God's precious child  
God is with you, oh my dear one  
God's precious child

You are blessed and you are holy  
Angels hover o'er you closely

Peace be with you, oh my dear one  
God's precious child.

##

Grace be with you, oh my dear one  
God's precious child  
God does bless you, oh my dear one  
God's precious child

Gift from God as sacred treasure  
Let God's blessing be your pleasure

Grace be with you, oh my darling  
God's precious child

##

Love be with you, oh my dear one

God's precious child  
Grace and peace are yours my dear one  
God's precious child

We are trusted with your caring  
God's rich blessings through you sharing

Love be with you, oh my dear one  
God's precious child

### **WORKSHOP 7--COOKING WORKSHOP**

**Scripture:** (Focus) Mark 10:13-16, Matthew 19:13-15, Luke 18: 15-17

**Focus:** Children's connection to God is affirmed and encouraged as they come to know Jesus as a loving, caring friend.

**Objectives:** The children will:

Understand that Jesus is the special friend of children and that children's special connection to God is valued.

Explore ways our relationship with God and Jesus is lived out through prayer.

Talk about what the story of Jesus touching and blessing the children means to them.

Tell stories about how Jesus is their friend.

Talk about being connected to God and how God loves them.

Learn where in the Bible to find the stories of Jesus and the children.

Be able to tell the story of Jesus and the children.

#### **What You Need**

Bibles

Lesson material, including Overview and Closing Prayer and Blessing Ritual

Worship Center

Name tags (or be sure you know the child's name!)

Foods needed for sharing a light meal together – of your choosing

Suggestions: crackers and peanut butter, apples, oranges, banana, raisins, nuts (check for nut allergies!), cheese to be cubed, yogurt, granola

#### *Preparation*

Become familiar with your material, including the overview and spiritual practice for leaders, as well as children.

Practice the Closing Prayer and Blessing Ritual until you are comfortable with it.

If the cooking workshop is set up in a space other than a kitchen, have a water source and cleaning supplies readily available.

The sharing of food is important for the covenant community to experience God's presence. Set up a table and chairs for enjoying the food prepared in the workshop. A tablecloth, flowers, candles, and other table decorations signal that this experience is special.

Be conscious of safety in the kitchen and what each age group can do. Supervise children carefully as they use knives or other sharp utensils and are near a heat source.

Set up the worship center.

Thank God the opportunity to be with the children and pray for God's guidance.

#### **What You Do**

Greet the Children, being certain that you know each one's name and that they know what to call you. If needed, use name tags.

Gather the children together and share an Opening time prayer. Use a prayer such as this: "Gracious God, thank you for all our blessings, for food and friends and learning together."

Read the Scripture. See **About Teaching the Bible Story** in the Introduction section.  
Explain the Project. Talk about Jesus eating with his friends. Let the children tell you about stories they know where Jesus ate with others. Be sure the story of the boy who gave up his food to feed the 5000 is mentioned. Talk about the Last Supper and Jesus telling those with him to remember him each time they ate. The children will probably tell you all the important aspects of thinking about Jesus, as you eat together. You might mention the fact that there are those who leave an empty place at their meal table, to remind them of the presence of God (Jesus) with them. Talk about saying grace at meal and why people do this. You may have this conversation around a table or as you prepare to share a light meal with one another.  
Prepare your meal. Assemble all of the ingredients (food) and the utensils on a table. Be sure you and the children have washed your hands thoroughly. Invite the children to join you at the table. Let the children take turns cutting and dividing the food between plates.  
Have some of the children clean up the area while others are setting the table for the snack. See the suggestions at the beginning of Cooking about setting a nice table, which says “this is special”.  
Share the Food Prepared., beginning with a Grace (a suggestion included below).  
Closing Prayer and Blessing Ritual (See Introduction portion of this curriculum).

“Lord Jesus Be Our Holy Guest” Grace  
Lord Jesus be our Holy Guest,  
Our morning joy,  
Our evening rest.  
May this food

### **Supplemental Background Material** ***Jesus and the Children*** **Prayer and Spirituality**

#### On The Holiness of Children

understanding, saying yes, to the holiness of children means acknowledging the imago dei, the image of God in which each person is made  
accepting the holiness of children means also accepting the holiness which is part of each of us  
seeing in each one the image of God means our relationships change, our interactions are challenged, our lives transformed

Jesus has very stern words to say to those who would get between him and children  
Actual children in years of age and children in faith whatever their age

There are 3 basic ways of looking at children, out of which is formed our thoughts about, interactions with children and, indeed, with all people.

If we see children as innately evil (original sin, depravity) – we do to children, to get them redeemed saved from eternal damnation.

If we see children as blank slates or malleable clay, waiting for our imprint to make them what they are to be – we do for children.

If we see children as born connected to the God, Who made us all, as holy in that connection; then we see them as unfolding and we do with children – we go with them on a journey of faith and growth in discipleship, teaching them and learning from them.

Hans-Ruedi Weber, once head of the World Council of Churches, says that a close reading of the Gospel passages where Jesus is in the company of children express the very heart of the Christian gospel. Jesus says simply, “Look at these little ones, these children. They ARE the Kingdom of God in your midst.”

In a prayer before a class began, on October 26, 2001 after reading Jeremiah 17: 5 – 11, Walter Brueggemann said,

“ God of all our times: We have known since the day of our birth that our primal task is to grow to basic trust in you,  
to rely on you in every circumstance,  
to know that you would return when you are away,  
to trust that in your absence you will soon be present,  
to be assured that your silence bespeaks attentiveness and not neglect,  
to know that in your abiding faithfulness,  
“all will be well and all will be well.”\*

Those who have read Erik Erikson’s *Childhood and Society* hear the echo, consciously or unconsciously intended, of the first task of life in that developmental schemata : Basic Trust vs. Basic Mistrust. And we hear in the prayer too the fear/assurance pattern of the newborn infant and the parental care.

What strikes me as well is Brueggemann’s phrase “to grow to basic trust”. We are in the midst of a process of becoming where we begin\*\*. If the first task is reasonably well negotiated the foundation is laid but the growth continues. If the first task is reasonably well cared for then the journey continues on “good legs.”

The Jeremiah passage contrasts the state of blessedness/cursedness of they who trust in God or in human strength only. The one who trusts in God is like a “tree planted by the water, that sends out its roots by the stream.” This again is an image of growth well begun and nourished in a state of blessedness where trust is first learned in parental arms and care and is seen, when appropriate, to be the “primal task” of those growing in faith.

As is spoken again and again to young children, each by name, in the Blessing Center’s Children’s Chapel and in One-on-One Nurture times at Memorial United Presbyterian Church, Xenia, OH:  
“God loves you  
God created you for God’s own  
God will be with you  
God blesses you.”

\*(page 47 Awed to Heaven Rooted in Earth Augsburg Fortress 2003 0-8006-3460-8)

\*\* “And the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time.” -T.S. Eliot

And a woman who held a babe against her bosom said,  
Speak to us of Children.  
And he said:  
Your children are not your children.  
They are the sons and daughter of Life's longing for itself.  
They come through you but not from you,  
And though they are with you  
yet they belong not to you.  
\*\*\*\*\*  
You may give them your love  
but not your thoughts,  
for they have their own thoughts.  
You may house their bodies  
but not their souls,

for their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow, which you cannot  
visit,  
not even in your dreams.  
You may strive to be like them,  
but seek not to make them like you.  
For life goes not backward  
nor tarries with yesterday.  
You are the bows from which your children as living arrows are sent  
forth.  
The archer sees the mark upon the path of the infinite,  
and He bends you with his might that His arrows may go swift and  
far.  
Let your bending in the Archer's hand be for gladness;  
For even as He loves the arrow that flies,  
So He loves also the bow that is stable.

--from The Prophet, by Kahlil Gibran  
\*\*\*\*\*

God loves the arrow that flies as well as the arrow that is grounded or  
broken or bent.  
God loves the bow that is stable, as well as the bow that is unstable.  
God loves those who love God, as well as those who have yet to find the  
God Who loves them.  
--this piece was shared by Terry Biers, Educator, the Miami Presbytery, 2003