

PRAYER

GOD HELPS

PRAYER
PEOPLE
PRAY

PRAYER

PRAYER

PRAYER



BAND

PRAYER
C

PLANNING GUIDE

PRAYER



CONTENTS

Aims	3
Background notes for teachers	4
BAND C students	6
Goals	8
Menus	
Bible references	10
Introductory activities	12
Development activities	15
Response activities	19
Recommended resources.....	21
Planning pro-forma	23
Model unit for Level 1	27
(with teacher resource sheets)	
Model unit for Level 2.....	39
(with teacher resource sheets)	
Model unit for Level 3.....	49
(with teacher resource sheets)	
Students and families	55

This planning guide is a part of LIFE, a Christian Studies curriculum developed for Lutheran schools.

LIFE is a joint project of the Board for Lutheran Schools of the Lutheran Church of Australia and Openbook Publishers.

God helps people pray is one of twelve concepts covered by LIFE curriculum.

This BAND C planning guide contains model units for three years covering the transition from primary to secondary school.

Writer: Anne Dohnt

Theological adviser: David Strelan

Editorial adviser: Mary Jo Zwar

Published March 1999

© Board for Lutheran Schools, Lutheran Church of Australia, 197 Archer Street, North Adelaide, SA 5006

Printed and published by Openbook Publishers, 205 Halifax Street, Adelaide, South Australia 5000

GOD HELPS PEOPLE PRAY

AIMS

The ultimate aim of LIFE curriculum is that

- students will come to know God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit
- students will have faith in God as their Father, Saviour, and Helper.

We understand that faith is entirely a gift of the Holy Spirit.

We teach in obedience to Jesus' command to go and teach.

*How can people have faith in the Lord
and ask him to save them,
if they have never heard about him?
And how can they hear,
unless someone tells them?
Romans 10:14 (CEV)*

GOD HELPS PEOPLE PRAY

As Christians we believe this and are compelled to tell others.

Our aim in teaching this concept is that students

- hear,
- explore and
- reflect on

these faith statements:

1. God invites people to pray to him in Jesus' name
2. God promises to hear and answer prayer
3. Jesus taught people to pray

BACKGROUND NOTES FOR TEACHERS

GOD HELPS PEOPLE PRAY

WHAT IS PRAYER? Prayer is communicating with God. Christian prayer is an expression of the relationship God has restored with people through Jesus Christ. It is a conversation with God that God initiates; we talk to God because he has spoken to us and invites us to speak to him.

Christian prayer flows from Christian faith. It is based on the gospel of God's love and acceptance for the sake of Jesus Christ. We don't pray in order to get close to God; we pray because God is already and always close to us and invites and encourages us to communicate with him by our words and thoughts, and even just by our deep longings (Romans 8:14–17, 26,27. Note also how already in the Old Testament people of faith, such as Abraham, Moses and the psalmists, spoke with God very intimately, sometimes even 'argued' with God).

God says to each person who believes in Jesus: 'You are my child. I love you. Come and talk to me about any and every part of your life' (Psalm 50:15; Matthew 7:7,8).

ASK, THANK,

PRAISE We can talk to God about anything and everything in our prayers. We praise and thank God for all that he is and all that he does for us. We ask for things we need for our spiritual and our physical life. God encourages us also to pray for other people (1 Timothy 2:1,2; Matthew 5:44).

Our Father wants us to pray regularly, in any situation and at any time (1 Thessalonians 5:17,18): in public or private (Matthew 6:6), in stillness and isolation or in busyness and turmoil.

IN JESUS' NAME We can't talk about prayer without talking about Jesus. Jesus alone makes prayer possible. It is through Jesus that we have access to the Father (John 14:6; Matthew 27:51; Hebrews 10:19–22). Jesus has removed the obstacles and barriers that stop God from hearing prayer, namely, human sin and guilt. We are children of God 'through faith in Christ Jesus' (Galatians 3:26).

Jesus tells us that we should pray 'in his name' (John 16:23). This is like Jesus giving us his credit card and his pin number to draw on God's account. To pray in Jesus' name does not mean just tacking Jesus' name onto our prayers as some kind of magic formula. It means praying with faith in Jesus Christ, approaching God with Jesus' credentials instead of our own.

We ask 'for Jesus' sake' — not because of who we are or what we have done, but because of who Jesus is and what Jesus has done for us.

DOES GOD ANSWER PRAYER? God promises to answer every prayer that comes from faith in Jesus (John 14:13,14; 15:7; 16:23; Matthew 7:7–11; Psalm 50:15). So Christians can pray with complete confidence.

God's answer might be something he **does** (eg healing, protecting, forgiving). Often God wants to use us ourselves as his agents for answering our prayers. Or God's answer might be something he **says**

(eg encouraging, reassuring [eg 2 Corinthians 12:7–10]). This does not mean that we should expect some direct message from God in answer to our prayers (although, of course, God can answer this way if he chooses). But in many instances God's answer to our prayers is already available to us in the things he says to us in the Scriptures. This is one of the reasons why prayer should always be closely linked to reading and hearing God's word.

Christians believe that God answers prayer in his own way and in his own time. Often God's method and timing are better than what we had in mind. Sometimes we see his answer right away. But often we recognise God's answer only when we look back some time later. Because we trust our Father's love and wisdom, we leave it to him to decide. He knows best what we need (Matthew 6:32b).

As Girgensohn has pointed out, in actual fact God has already answered all our prayers in Jesus, even before we pray. 'He himself

When the Holy Spirit leads people to faith in Jesus, he makes it possible for them to pray. Christian prayer is an expression of faith in which we speak to God with the confidence that he will hear us for Jesus' sake.

Theological Foundations of LIFE Curriculum

[Jesus] and what is given and promised in him, is the ultimate answer to all prayer' (*Teaching Luther's Catechism* p 208f, Muhlenberg Press 1959).

NOT A MEANS OF GRACE Some Christians tend to make prayer a 'means of grace', for example, when they say: 'We get God's love (and forgiveness) by praying for it'. Lutherans reject this. God gives these and other blessings to us through his word and the sacraments. It is **God's answer — not our praying** that gets these blessings for us. (Note Luther's explanations of the first four prayers in the Lord's Prayer.)

'YOUR WILL BE DONE' As Christians we know that God's will for us (what God wants for us) is always 'good and gracious'. This gives us the confidence to ask unconditionally for those things we know quite clearly that God wants for us — spiritual blessings, such as forgiveness, faith, the gift of the Spirit. However, when we don't know precisely what

God wants for us (for example, physical blessings such as health, work, happy families), we say: 'Father, give us these things if it is your will'.

THE LORD'S PRAYER We learn much about prayer from Jesus' example and teaching. The gospels frequently report that Jesus spent time in prayer (eg Matthew 14:23; and especially his prayer for his disciples [John 17] and his prayers in Gethsemane and on the cross).

The Lord's Prayer teaches us how to pray. For example, we pray as children talking to a loving Father. We get our priorities right: first, things about God ('Hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done . . .'), then things about us ('Give us this day . . .') etc). We say 'our', 'we' and 'us' because we are praying not just for ourselves, but also for others.

The Lord's Prayer is like the framework for our prayers. We fill in the details which might be different each time we pray.

FOR REFLECTION AND/OR DISCUSSION

1. What questions do the *Background Notes* raise for you? What questions do you think your students will have on the topic of Christian prayer?
2. Why is this an important topic to teach to your students? What implications might the topic have for the life of your school?
3.
 - a) Does prayer change us or change God or both?
 - b) Why do some Christians pray to the saints?
 - c) Does God answer the prayers of non-Christians?
4. What is the difference between Christian prayer and non-Christian prayer? between Christian prayer and New Age-style meditation?
5. Is it appropriate to speak about 'the power of prayer'? Does the 'power' lie in the prayer or in the one who answers prayer?

FOR FURTHER READING

Small Catechism, Large Catechism The Lord's Prayer

Teaching Luther's Catechism: The Lord's Prayer
H Girgensohn, Muhlenberg Press, 1959

'Does prayer work?' *Good Question* : p 106 ed B Schwarz, 1995 Openbook

God for us pp 44–46 D Strelan, 1988 Openbook

BAND C STUDENTS

Within your class there may well be a range of experiences with regard to prayer. For some students prayer may already be an important part of their lives. Others may never have engaged in prayer and may be reluctant to pray.




In this concept students will be learning about prayer as a vital part of Christians' relationship with God. Christian prayer flows from Christian faith. Keep the gospel central in this unit, as Christians believe that it is because of Jesus that we can pray confidently. As the students in your class will have diverse faith backgrounds, you will need to be sensitive when planning prayer activities. Do not force students to pray or to express beliefs they do not hold. Try to ensure that all students hear the gospel message that they are valued and accepted for Jesus' sake and that God invites them to pray in Jesus' name.

It is equally important to establish clear behavioural expectations in order to respect those students who want to pray. Encourage those students who are unfamiliar with praying to observe what is taking place or to use the time provided to reflect on issues which are important to them or to read what other people have prayed about (eg in psalms).

While exploring the concept of prayer, look for opportunities to share with the students your own experiences with prayer and the way God has answered your prayers.

When praying in the classroom, pray in language and about concepts that students are familiar with. Avoid giving the impression that prayer is a formal talk with magic words and phrases about things beyond the students' experiences. Avoid giving students the impression that prayer provides the opportunity to obtain anything wished for.

Develop the concept that God always answers prayers, but this doesn't mean that the answer is always 'yes'. God answers in ways that take into account what is best for us. Sometimes this can mean God's answer is 'no' or 'wait' or takes a different form from what we expect.

DEVELOPMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS		IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING
Students may experience a strong sense of personal guilt.		Reassure students that God loves and forgives them. Provide opportunities for students to study prayers of confession and stories in which people confess their sins to God and receive God's forgiveness.
Students are more willing and able to consider their personal response to Jesus.		Provide opportunities for students to discuss or to reflect in a journal about issues relating to a personal relationship with Jesus. Develop an atmosphere where students are encouraged to express their thoughts and questions. Be affirming of all students. Encourage interested students to consider establishing a prayer group or prayer journal.
Students have an interest in personal development.		Practise activities such as reflective and meditative prayer styles. Encourage students to establish a prayer journal and regular prayer time for their own personal growth.

Students have a tendency to focus on their negative qualities and to wish they were different or better in many ways.



Study Bible stories of people who felt like outcasts and experienced Jesus' love and acceptance.

Provide opportunities to explore psalms in which people express their varying emotions.

Explore the Christian belief that all people have been created with a unique blend of strengths and weaknesses and that God loves each person just as he or she is.

Students are growing in awareness of real-life issues.



Encourage students to pray about issues which concern them and provide opportunities for them to do so.