

Prayer in the Preschool Setting

Preschoolers have the natural gifts of enthusiasm and imagination. These gifts enrich the learning environment and create a learning space that thrives on activity and a wide variety of experiences. These gifts are also important to remember when praying with young children.

Prayer with preschool children is best when it is active, experiential and incorporates the five senses. Since reading is a skill not yet attained by most preschoolers, prayer that involves short, repetitive responses or includes singing and movement is most effective.

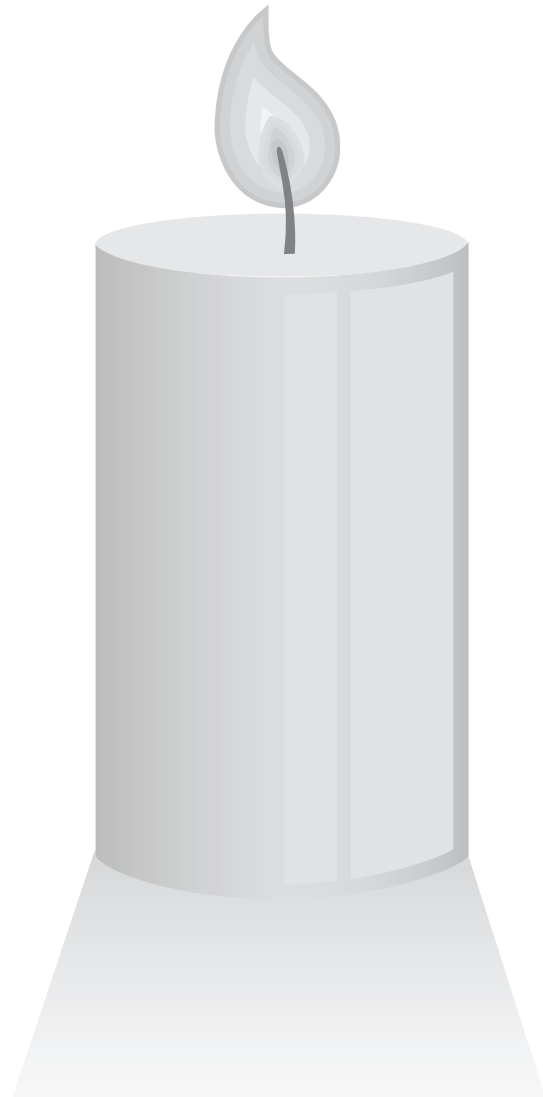
The Prayer Environment

The setting for prayer is important. It is often helpful to move children from their chairs and desks to a prayer “center” or area. This can be done as a procession or simply with a moving song or verbal direction. Moving to a different space for prayer can be a signal to young children that prayer time is a special time.

You can also lower the lights and light a candle (if allowed) or use a small lamp or battery-powered flicker candle. A prayer table with a Bible and some simple symbols of faith or symbols related to the current lesson can also add to the space. All of these elements add to a multi-sensory environment which becomes conducive to prayer.

A Model of Prayer

Understanding how preschoolers think and feel about God enables you to help them thrive in the prayer setting. Beginning at an early age, children come to know God through their parents’ love for them and through the care others offer to them. They often understand God only in relation to the important adult relationships in their lives: through interaction with their parents, their pastor or their teacher. Therefore, your own attitude and disposition, especially during prayer time, is of utmost importance. Small children are watching your actions, movements and tone, and will likely mimic these when they approach prayer.



Encouraging Participation

When introducing spontaneous prayer as part of the preschool classroom, choose a tangible item, such as an unlit class candle, a “prayer stone,” or a picture of someone praying, to pass around. When a child receives the prayer item, they will be cued to pray for someone or something. This allows everyone the opportunity to actively participate. However, always respect any child who chooses not to pray aloud.

Prayer is an important part of the preschool classroom. By engaging young children in prayer, you are truly preparing them for a life of faith and a relationship with God. By using the various types of prayer offered throughout the *Stories of God's Love* program, you will be able to joyfully engage the children as they take their first steps of faith.