

# Junior Soldiers

Unit 11 : Lesson 5



## How do you know that your prayers are answered?

**PURPOSE :** For the children to explore and understand that God ALWAYS hears and listens to us when we pray.

*'We are certain that God will hear our prayers when we ask for what pleases him.'*

1 John 5:14 (CEV)

## Consider & Prepare

### Read:

Daniel 6:4–28

1 Samuel 1:9–20

Jonah 2

2 Corinthians 12:7–10

Most children have a simple understanding of prayer, mainly asking God for things, praying for others and thanking him for what they have. This lesson aims to extend their understanding of prayer and to explore some of the harder questions like: How do I *know* that God has heard me? How do I know that he has answered me? Why is it that sometimes, when I pray, God doesn't seem to give me an answer?

When Jesus called on God to raise Lazarus from the dead, he said, 'Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me.' (John 11:41–42)

Further assurance comes in 1 John 5:14, 'This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him.'

The Bible is full of faithful people who prayed and believed that God heard them. Some of these that we will look at in this lesson are Daniel, Hannah, Jonah and Paul. Jesus also tells us the parable of the persistent widow (Luke 18:1–8) to remind us to not give up on our prayers.

This lesson will look at some of these examples and allow children to examine how faithfulness and perseverance in prayer are essential. Read over these Bible stories before the lesson and spend some time looking at how these Bible characters lived out their prayer life. Spend some time with God, reflecting on what you are praying about, and what prayers He has answered for you. What prayers are you still waiting to be answered? Perhaps God has given you an answer that was not what you were expecting or hoping for.

It is important to remember that there are some serious issues we might face in life. Many people will pray about these issues but feel that God is either not present or not answering their prayers. For example, questions like, 'Why doesn't God choose to heal my loved one with cancer?' aren't easily answered. Regardless of whether God says, 'Yes', 'No' or 'Not yet, we need to hold firmly to the fact that he is the sovereign God and he is there for us to cast all our cares on, 'because he cares for you' (1 Peter 5:7).

It is really important in this lesson, as leaders, to be prepared and have thought about your own responses to the topic but especially to the questions within the 'Tying In' section. This is a difficult topic that even many adults struggle with but if we are going to help our children to tackle the tough topics they need to see how prayer works in real life. It is very powerful to share your own stories with the children; it will help to make more links from the concept into their world and to help them to see how others have navigated these sorts of situations.

### **What you will need:**

#### **For 'Connecting In'**

- Duplo or coloured wooden blocks
- Printed sets of instructions for each group

#### **For 'The Main Thing'**

- Sheets of A3 or butchers paper
- Textas
- Bibles

#### **For 'Tying In'**

- Four sheets of coloured paper per child
- Textas

#### **For 'Home & Beyond'**

- Print off the 'Home & Beyond' cards for each child.



# Connecting In

## Build it up...

For this activity, each group will need a set of Duplo blocks or coloured wooden blocks that can be stacked on top of each other in order to make a tower. You will need to divide your group into at least two teams (more if needed) and, if there are only a few children in each group, they can keep having more turns until all the instructions are finished. You will need to have a printed copy of prepared instructions for each group. Each set of instructions will be different. Two examples of these instructions are provided below; you may need to create another set if you have more than two groups.



- 'Today we are going to participate in a relay race.'
- One person from each group will need to stand out the front of the room with the instructions for their team.
- The rest of the group will be at the other end of the room with the container of blocks.
- When you say go, one person from the block end needs to go to the team member out the front and received the first instruction, go back to the blocks and begin their tower.
- Continue until all instructions have been given and the tower is complete.
- Once all the teams are finished take the instructions and compare them to the finished tower to see that the right colours have been put in the right order.
- 'Well done to those who have all the blocks in the right order.'

Example of two sets of instructions for two groups:

### Set 1

1. You need to find a blue block. This goes on the bottom.
2. You need to find a red block. This goes on top of the blue block.
3. You need to find a yellow block. This goes on top of the red block.
4. You need to find a green block. This goes on top of the yellow block.
5. You need to find a red block. This goes on the top.

### Set 2

1. You need to find a green block. This goes on the bottom.
2. You need to find a red block. This goes on top of the green block.
3. You need to find a blue block. This goes on top of the red block.
4. You need to find a green block. This goes on top of the blue block.
5. You need to find a yellow block. This goes on the top.

**Link:** 'Well, we have just played a game where we know—by each team completing the task correctly—that they have heard the clues given to them by their team member. They heard the instruction and went and put the appropriate coloured block into their tower, this shows they have heard the instructions.

'Today we are going to be thinking about prayer and how we know God has heard what we have prayed about; we will explore how we might look for evidence that he has heard and responded to our prayers. Like in the game we played, we saw the evidence of people having heard the instructions because of where they placed there blocks; we can see evidence around us that shows that God has heard our prayers.

'I wonder if you have ever had a time when you think that God has not heard or answered your prayers. *(Allow opportunity for the children to respond.)*

'I like to think of prayer as a conversation between me and God. You have conversations with lots of people every day but if we think specifically about our conversations with our parents, that will help us best (though not totally) to understand our conversations with God and how he might respond.

'There might be times when we ask our parents for things—for example, 'Can I go to play at my friend's house tomorrow?', 'Can you buy me that video game?', 'Can you take me to the park?' etc. They will generally say 'Yes' or 'No', sometimes they might say 'Maybe' or 'Not right now'. When parents say 'no' to us, it might be because they don't think that something is good for us, not a wise choice or perhaps it doesn't fit into the schedule. Most parents, because they love their children, will not generally say 'no' just to be mean. Most parents want the best for their children and want to help their children navigate life by making wise choices.

'This is just like God, he loves us so much and wants good things for us, we are told this in Matthew 7: 7–12, that God is our Heavenly Father and he loves to give us good gifts. He also, like our parents, wants to help us navigate through life by making wise choices. When we pray and ask God for things, he may respond like our parents with a 'yes' or a 'no' or 'not yet'. The response is not always what you expect or want but you can trust that God always hears your prayers. Let's look at 1 John 5:14–15 -

*'We are certain that God will hear our prayers when we ask for what pleases him. And if we know that God listens when we pray, we are sure that our prayers have already been answered.'*



## The Main Thing

### People praying in the Bible...

For this section you will need some sheets of A3 or butchers paper, some Bibles and textas.

In this section, the children will have the opportunity to explore together some Bible characters and how they prayed in particular circumstances, as well as looking for evidence as to how they know God has heard and responded to their prayers.

It would be good to divide the children into small groups. Depending on the number of small groups that you have, give each group one or two of the passages below for them to look at and explore and have them report back to the whole group on their findings. Using the paper and textas provided, create a character profile with pictures and information about the person outlined in the passage as you respond to the questions.

'We have talked together about the answers that our parents might give us when we ask them for things and how this might help us understand how God responds to our prayers. I am sure there are times when you can see clear evidence of how God has responded to your prayers but then other times when you are not so sure if he has heard or responded. All of us—grownups, teenagers, children—struggle with this at different times. If you ever feel like this, it is important to chat to someone you trust, e.g. parents, Big Bud, trusted leader or friend etc. But remember that God *does* hear our prayers. We are going to explore some Bible passages now and have a look at how some people prayed and the evidence that might have told them that God had heard and responded to their prayers.'

Explore the following questions in small groups in relation to this passage.

- Who is the person who is praying?
- What can you tell us about this person?
- How did they pray?
- What did they talk to God about?
- What evidence is there to show that God has heard and responded to their prayers?
- I wonder if the answer that God gave was what they expected.
- Daniel 6:4–28
  - Daniel
  - Three times a day, on his knees
  - He is faithful
  - He gave thanks to God
  - Darius prayed that God would rescue Daniel
  - Daniel was saved from the Lions
- 1 Samuel 1:9–20
  - Hannah
  - She is brokenhearted
  - She prayed silently for a long time
  - She told the Lord about her problems
  - She asked God for a baby
  - God gave her a son
- Jonah 2
  - Jonah
  - Stuck in a whale
  - He tells the story of how God has rescued him
  - He makes a promise to always serve him
  - God makes the fish vomit Jonah up onto land
- 2 Corinthians 12:7–10
  - Paul
  - Begged three times for suffering to stop
  - He is sharing God's answer to prayer with everyone
  - God has let him know that his grace is enough
- Luke 18:1–8
  - Parable that Jesus told about the widow and the judge
  - She kept pestering the judge asking him to be fair
  - The judge ended up helping her because he thought she would continue to bother him
  - Jesus said to pray to God day and night



When the groups have finished their profiles bring them back together to share with the others what they have found out.

‘You know, God doesn’t change. The God that these people we’ve heard about prayed to, is the same God we pray to. And if we’ve read today of the evidence of God hearing someone’s prayer and answering it, why should we doubt that God will hear our prayer and answer it? God is God: always has been, always will be. And one of the things he does is answer prayer when the nature of our prayer pleases him and isn’t just about our own selfish desires or wishes.’

# Tying In

## What do you think?

For this activity each child will need four sheets of coloured paper, on one sheet write the letter A, on another write B, on another write C and the final one write D.

During this activity, the children will have the opportunity to express what they think of the following questions. Each question and the answer options will be read out slowly and then the children will be given the opportunity to hold up the piece of paper that corresponds to the response that best suits what they think. After the children have shared their responses to the question, allow some time for them to make comments if they would like about what they think. Some clarifying questions that you might like to use are: 'Can you tell me why you chose that response? Can you tell me some more about that? Why?' etc.



1. Prayer is:
  - A. Saying special words over and over
  - B. Asking God for things
  - C. Having a conversation with God
  - D. All of the above
2. Who can pray?
  - A. Anyone
  - B. Only adults
  - C. Only people who have never made an unwise choice
  - D. All of the above
3. What can we pray about?
  - A. Something that is worrying us
  - B. Anything at all
  - C. People who are sick
  - D. All of the above
4. Do you pray?
  - A. Every day
  - B. Sometimes
  - C. Hardly ever
  - D. All the time
5. Do you think that God hears your prayers?
  - A. No
  - B. Yes
  - C. Sometimes
  - D. I don't know

'Today we have looked at some people in the Bible and how they prayed as well as how they could see that God had responded to their prayers. You have also just had the opportunity to share some of your thoughts on prayer, this will help you as you reflect on the next activity we are going to do in our small groups. Just like we looked at the passages from the Bible and asked some questions about the people in them, we are going to ask those same questions about ourselves.

In small groups explore the following questions together, think about these questions in relation to yourself, who you are, how you like to pray and evidence that you have seen about how God has answered your prayers. (It is important that each leader is willing to share their own answers to these questions so that the children can see another example of God answering prayer in real life.)

When finished sharing in small groups, it is important that the leader prays with and for each of the children. Read together the following verse:  
*'Always be full of joy. Never stop praying. Whatever happens, always be thankful. This is how God wants you to live in Christ Jesus.'*  
1 Thessalonians 5: 16–18



## Home & Beyond


Print off the 'Home & Beyond' cards attached. The children might like to keep these in their journals or notebook where they could write or stick the challenges, reflect, answer questions or complete activities each week.

### Prayer List...

- During the week, write a list or some notes about some of the things you have been talking with God about.
- In coming days, look back over the list and see where God has been answering prayers.
- Ask your family or Big Bud if there is something they would like you to pray for and add it to your list.
- Place this verse somewhere that you will remember to read it throughout the week.

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