

Children's Worship: Spiritual Practices

8-week lesson plan

Week 1: Practicing God's presence

Sing God is with us everywhere (see handout #1)

Have a couple of object that some of the kids/adults in your congregation could use/play well. Perhaps a soccer ball or a musical instrument? Pre-arrange for demonstrations with these items and admire how well they can do it. Talk about how they learned what they're doing. (*Lots of practice!*) Ask what other things take lots of practice? (*Reading, spelling, riding a bike, etc.*) With constant practice, we eventually do these things without even thinking!

Talk about how the same is true about following Jesus. We *practice* following Jesus. When we follow Jesus, the most important thing to practice is learning to see what God is doing around us. Becoming aware of God's presence. Learning to notice God is with us. The best place to practice thinking about God is in our homes because we meet God in the everyday things.

Sing God is with us everywhere.

Offer a prayer of thankfulness for God's presence.

Week 2: Practicing God's love

Sing 2x: Jesus loves me (with motions – see handout #2)

Ask the children how they know they're loved. (*Someone tells you or shows you.*) Ask how they feel when they're loved. Note that when we know that we're loved, we have more love to share with others.

Review a bit from last week: practicing things that we want to learn. We also practice watching for God. We practice awareness of God's presence... in our homes... again and again.

We also practice loving each other in our homes. As we practice loving each other, we practice God's love. As we practice loving each other, we learn about God's love. Talk about God's love and how much God loves us. (*more than we can imagine!*) Ask the children for examples that remind us that God loves us. One way we can practice God's love is by singing about it...

Sing Jesus loves me.

Offer a prayer of thankfulness for God's love.

Week 3: Practicing Scripture

Ask the children if they have pockets. What do they have in their pockets? Ask a couple “bigger” people what they have in their pockets. (*phone... pens...*) Have something to show from your own pockets. Note that we put into our pockets the things that are most important to us; the things we can't do without. What we *carry* in our pockets is whatever we put *into* them.¹

Our minds are a bit like pockets. The things we put into our *mind* pockets are the things that are most important to us. When we put Scripture into our *mind* pockets, scripture will be there to pull out when we're awake at night or when we're afraid. Encourage the children to put *Scripture* in their *mind* pockets; as we do that, we become more like Jesus.

Singing scripture is a great way to put it into our mind pockets.

Sing *Let the children come to me* (from Matthew 19:14 - *Sing the Story* #47 – see handout #3)

Offer a prayer of thanksgiving for God's Word that we can keep in our minds.

Week 4: Practicing Prayer

Review the ideas of practicing, to learn to do things better: like soccer and musical instruments. We also practice things that help us grow our faith. We practice watching for God; we practice God's love, and we practice putting scripture into our mind pockets.

When we know God is with us and God loves us, and when we *know* God's Word, we respond by *talking* with God. God is our friend. God is always with us! Ask the children how they talk to God and what they talk to God about. The Bible says to pray constantly! Keep on talking to God...All...The...Time! The Bible says to pray constantly. We can pray all day long. There are lots of times and lots of ways to talk to God.

Sing a song about praying all day long: *Whisper a prayer in the morning* (*with motions; see handout #4*).

Offer a prayer of thanksgiving that God listens when we pray.

Week 5: Practicing Sabbath

Review the ideas of practice. Introduce today's theme of practicing Sabbath. In Exodus 20:6 it says "Remember the Sabbath day and treat it as holy."

Ask the children what “Sabbath” means. After hearing from them, note that Sabbath is a time to stop the normal things we do. It's a special time to rest and take a nap. Ask them why they take naps (or why their mom and dad tell them to take naps). What happens if we don't take naps?

¹ Mary Klassen, "Biblical Story Telling, Biblical Spirituality class, March 3, 2011.

God knows that we all get tired if we don't take breaks. God knows we need a day to stop the busy-busy things. So God said: Take a Sabbath. God even took a Sabbath. God created the world in six days (perhaps counting together). On the 7th day, God stopped working. God rested. God wants us to do that too. God know we feel better when we rest.

Last week we talked about prayer - whispering a prayer to God all day long. Prayer is also listening to God. Sometimes we have to stop the busy things we're doing so that we can listen. In Psalm 46:10, God says: Be still and know that I am God. This reminds us to STOP the busy things we do... it reminds us to take some quiet time.

Sing: *Be still and know that I am God* (with motions; see handout #5)

Offer a prayer of thanksgiving for times to rest from the busy things we do.

Week 6: Practicing Hospitality

Review the ideas of practice and introduce today's theme of hospitality. Ask the children if they know what this word means. Then ask if they know what a hospital is. What happens at a hospital? (*take care of other people*) Point out that these words are related: hospitals and hospitality. Hospitality is also about taking care of other people.² Hospitality is making other people feel welcome; letting them know we love and care about them.

Ask the children what they do to welcome people when they come to visit. (*Say hi; invite them to play; share your toys*) Jesus says in John 15:12 that we should love one another. Hospitality is about sharing with others. It's about loving others.

Introduce a song that reminds us to love others... *invite children to do motions with you...*

Sing *I've got peace, peace, peace in my fingers* (with motions; see handout #6)

Offer a prayer, asking God to fill us with love so we can share it with others.

Week 7: Practicing Service

Review the ideas of practice. Introduce today's topic of service and serving others. Ask for examples of service. How can we serve others? What might we do when our friend drops all their books on the floor? What will you do when you find out that your neighbor doesn't have food to eat?

Talk about Micah 6:8, which tells us to be fair, kind, and loving to others. When we do that, we honor God and share the light of Jesus in the world.

² <http://meaningfulmama.com/hospitality-chart-teaching-hospitality-to-kids.html>

Sing: *This little light of mine* (with motions)

Offer a prayer asking God to show us how to be fair, kind, and loving.

Week 8: Practicing with Song

Review the ideas of practice. Ask questions to help the children recall the things they've been learning. Note that one of the ways we have been practicing these things is by singing about them! Singing helps us learn new things and helps us keep them in our minds. When we sing scripture and prayers, we remember them better. When we sing about God's presence and love, the words become part of us for a lifetime. Music speaks to us in a way that words alone do not! Music changes us!

When we sing with motions, it also helps us remember better. Motions helps us tell people what we're thinking and feeling. Encourage the children to keep on singing the songs at home that we've been singing together.

Sing *Who's the king of the jungle* (with motions; see handout #8)

Offer a prayer of gratitude for music. Thank God for the joy of music and for being our King!

Suggested songs for this series:

1. God is with us everywhere
2. Jesus loves me
3. Let the children come to me
4. Whisper a prayer in the morning
5. Be still and know
6. I've got peace, peace in my fingers
7. This little light of mine
8. Who is the king of the jungle? Who? Who?